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OR,

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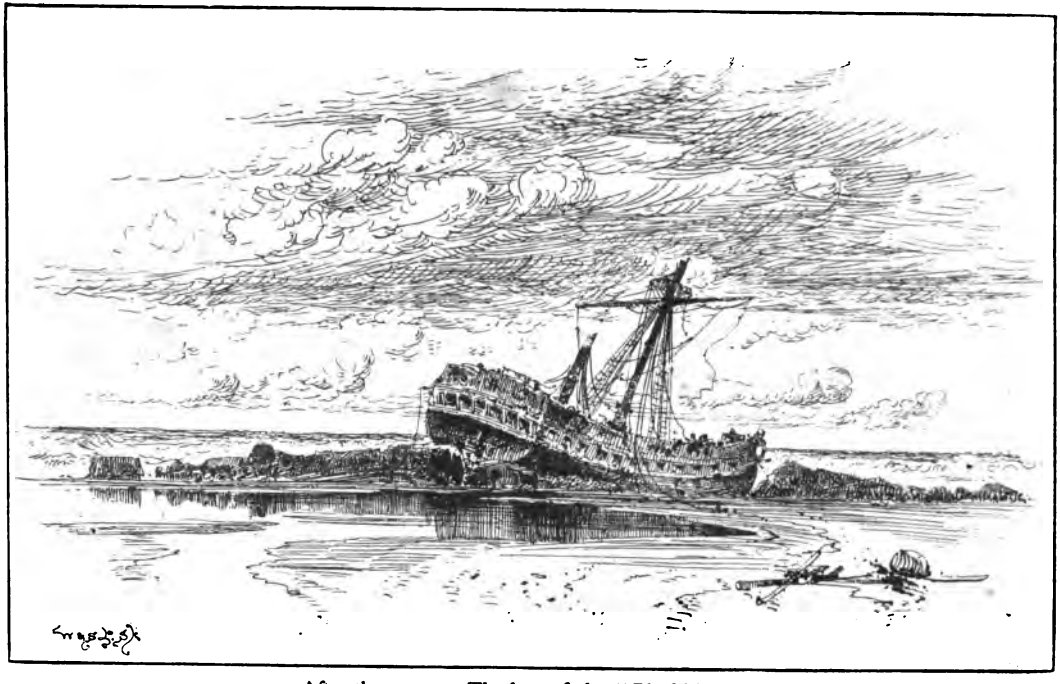

After the storm. The last of the "Blackbirder."

Partington
Collection
No.

"BLACKBIRDING"

IN THE

SOUTH PACIFIC;

OR,

The First White Man on the Beach.

BY

W. B. CHURCHWARD,

Author of "My Consulate in Samoa."

London:
SWAN SONNENSCHEIN & CO.,
PATERNOSTER SQUARE.
1888.

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THE SELWOOD PRINTING WORKS,
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CHAPTER I.

Old recollections.—Liverpool again.—Anticipated company.—The consul, baker, Jimmy, and the judge.—Lynch law.—An ugly set of ghosts.—Victim to circumstances.—The ancient visitor.—The black white man.—"Much married."—Promising British subjects.—More than allowance.—British the only white men.—Runaway convicts.—Improved savages.—Murder for fun.—Couch of human heads.—The end of a brute.—White men in Tahiti.—Square-headed Dutchmen.—A misunderstood compliment.—Its result.

"WELL, Mr. John King Bruce, I'm glad to see you are out again. Thought I had seen the last of you when I was sent for the other day."

"Yessar, I was main bad then, and thought there was another Britisher agoing to be planted up there 'mongst the land crabs in the cemetery, and that his name was Bruce.

"O Lord, sir! I could think of nothing but of those I expected soon to be with; and I assure you, sir, old, very old times came before me, just as if they were no further off than yesterday.

"I saw old Liverpool again, and many other places where this poor old body has been, for both good and evil.

"All the queer things what happened both before and after I struck 'Samoa' came up again before me. But what came stronger was the remembrance of those whom I soon expected to join.

"Those poor marines who were killed in the fight on Mutineer Point, all bleeding and gasping as they fell, and their funeral up there,—all that came.

"Then there was Mister L., the consul; the baker, whose name I don't now recollect; then poor old 'Jimmy,' and the judge, both of whom were so kind to me.

"Afraid? No, sir! They were all friends. There was one visitor I didn't like though, but I didn't fear him. He was that brute we strung up to the big cocoanut tree outside the saloon where he murdered his mate. I was one on that rope, pulled with a will, and would do so again. But then we had no court like now, and what else could we do?

"Anyway, Jimmy thought it healthy to go to 'Fr'isco' till the thing cooled down a little;

and lucky for him he did, as he was the first man that the judge from Fiji asked for on landing.

"We called it 'Vox Populi,' whatever that means; but the judge didn't seem to see it in the same way. He didn't bother me, anyway. I suppose I was the wrong colour to be taken notice of.

"All the same, that chap came to my memory, with his face all twisted, and his eyes starting right out of his head, just as he looked as we swung him aloft. But he didn't disturb me much.

"There were others, too, which neither you nor any one else knows anything about. I didn't like them; but I wasn't afraid. They all deserved what they got.

"Every dead man I knew came to see me in my wanderings; and I felt so tired and weary that I wanted to join them, for their trouble looked to be all over; and, sir, so would mine have been if you hadn't come; and I'm here now to thank you for your kindness. But even now, perhaps, it would have been better to have let me go."

"Not a bit, Bruce. You are worth twenty

dead men yet, and can't be allowed to cost the Government ten dollars cemetery fees for a long time to come. Why, you, 'the first white man on the beach,' have to be introduced to many more visitors yet before you go under. But come in and sit down. We'll have a bottle of beer, and you shall tell me, if you will, something of your history. You must have seen some curious things in your time."

"Ay, that I have, sir. Thank you! I will take a seat, but don't ask me to tell too many things about myself in old times, for I would much rather forget most of them.

"You might regret your kindness to me if I told you what I've been, and all I've done. Yet I swear that I was never willingly wicked, and that the circumstances which forced me are to blame for most bad things this poor old darkie has done."

I was in the verandah of my bungalow at Apia, Samoa, one very hot day, stretched out at full length on a cane chair, enjoying the little breeze that was stirring from off the oily waves, looking as though glazed with the oppressive heat, and too languid to show the smallest sign of breaking on the red-hot coral reef, steaming,

blurred, and indistinct in the distant flickering haze.

It was just the time of day when most people, both native and white, were taking their usual siesta under their mosquito nets, at all events, were resting within doors; and great was my surprise to see, right in the blazing sun, tottering along feebly, supporting himself with a staff, held in trembling hands, John King Bruce, "the first white man on the beach."

On came the old man, painfully making his way through the orange and breadfruit trees, and halting every now and then for breath, until reaching the verandah where I sat, he respectfully saluted, and the foregoing colloquy took place.

I soon had my visitor comfortably seated, with a glass of cool lager at his elbow, to which the poor old fellow had been a stranger for many a long day.

Bruce, in spite of his seven-worded sobriquet, was a negro, and figured in the consular books as having been born at Liverpool some time very little short of a century from the date of this incident.

In his younger days he must have been a

smart, middle-sized man, but old age and long continued sickness had converted him into one of the most miserable looking objects alive.

His face, with the skin hanging all loose and baggy, was twisted and wrinkled beyond description; yet his eyes, though deeply sunk in their orbits, glittered brightly from beneath the shelter of a shaggy pair of ancient, bristly eyebrows.

He was not entirely bald, for there still remained little tufts of snow-white wool, sparsely scattered all over an enormous cranium.

These irregular locks, swaying about in the wind, would ludicrously suggest a bevy of white waterfowl struggling to rise and quit a jet-black, shiny ocean, as represented by the dark scalp, always glistening with cocoanut oil, or some other such unguent.

Bruce had picked up, somehow, an education, such as it was; could both read and write, spoke English without any negro innovations, and was possessed of more than the usual amount of intelligence common to his class; and this, in spite of his great age, he had wonderfully preserved.

His history no one rightly knew, but at times he had given inquisitive people most astound-

ing tales, which, from their very nature and his hesitating delivery, could easily be seen were only meant to "boom" them off, as he termed it; and having been longer in Samoa than any live white in the place, he could spin what yarns he pleased without fear of contradiction.

The old sinner had been very much married, but could not have had a very joyous time of it, for tradition relates that he was always in a state of being thrashed by his wives' relations, and suffering from the desertions of his faithless spouses, who would, as is generally the custom in the Group, retire to the bosoms of their families when J. K. B. became weary of continually sharing his hard earned dollars with the ravenous crowds.

This practice, however, was only in vogue during the time that his marital arrangements were made "F'aa Samoa" (according to Samoan custom).

Being dark, the natives looked upon him as one of themselves, and treated him accordingly, to which for some time he was nothing loth. So he took his thrashings, robbings, and desertions in the most philosophic manner, and began

again in another direction, with, in due time, a like result.

He never bothered about his British nationality personally—although, on one or two occasions, he had had to perform national obligations —until he took his last wife, whom he married irrevocably and legally in the British Consulate.

From that time he asserted his position, claimed his rights of British protection, and no longer submitted to native coercion; and the two most lively youngsters on the beach at Apia, as black and genuine British subjects as can be found under the Union Jack, are the two sons of this negro-Samoan alliance. They show every promise of becoming splendid specimens of Pacific manhood, if their abnormal, vigorous adolescence does not develop a crisis for dissolution, provoked by unlucky daring adventure, or from necessary vindication of some breach of social law.

"Well, Bruce, don't tell me any more than you like. I don't want to persuade you to do anything against your will, but rest assured that what you do say I shall keep to myself, and that through me no one shall hear anything to your harm. However, before you start on

with your history, just tell me your age, and how you got the title of 'first white man on the beach.'"

The old fellow thought for a little, and then answered,—

"Sir, in a few more months I shall be fourscore years and eleven. Yes, this old weary bag of bones will then have lived ninety-one years—eleven more years than the Bible says we ought to live, don't it? I think I can remember that much, but it's many a long year since I read it, and it's too late now to begin again, my sight is so bad.

"As for the title, I gave that to myself when I first landed in these parts, and I consider I had a perfect right to do it.

"How could that be right when I'm a black man, do you say?

"Why, because I am British born and bred, thank God! and at that time no people in the islands but British were called 'white.'

"Then it was a very rare thing to see any other flag than the Union Jack flying in the Pacific; but it's awfully changed now. You have only got to look out of the window there to see that.

"All the same, there were two Britishers in Samoa when I came, but I couldn't count them in.

"They were the last of a gang of runaway convicts from Norfolk Island, who had gradually killed one another off till only this pair of beauties remained alive, and a precious couple they were.

"These ruffians were more tattooed than the Samoans themselves. Talk about savages! no savage was ever so fiercely brutal as these chaps.

"Murder was their fun—man, woman, or child, it didn't matter a rap. A club stroke or musket shot was always ready on the smallest provocation. But, to do them justice, they weren't cowards, and would meet any warrior, white or native, in fair and open fight, with gun, spear, or club, just as they pleased; and they had killed so many men that they were greatly feared.

"These two were always trying to get rid one of the other in the same way as the rest of the gang had been disposed of, till the one I knew on 'Manono' managed to best the 'Savaii' chap—caught him drunk at a feast, and finished him off with a bullet.

"I have seen that brute, sir, after a battle, carried about shoulder high on a litter, splashed from head to foot with human blood, quite stiff with it, and lying out at full length surrounded with dripping human heads, just hacked off the bodies, and actually making use of a heap of these horrible things as a Christian would a pillow.

"He was a real devil; but his last white killing brought about his own death. For, having got rid of his only white rival, he left off the sharp look-out for his own skin that he had kept up for so many years, and went in for careless enjoyment.

"The natives had by this time become very tired of his bullying; besides, his value had gone down considerably since there was no longer a white fighter with the rival tribe, so they determined to get rid of him.

"They soon planned the operation, and one day one of his wives called him to look at something outside the house in which they were. He turned round to see, when in a moment half a dozen clubs, which were waiting for him, came down on his head, and crushed it to atoms.

"Those were very lucky hits for this child, as the brute had promised to pay me a visit, and I knew what that meant.

"You can't call tattooed demons of that sort British; so you see, sir, my claim to the name I am proud of.

"Oh, yes, there was a sort of Portuguee chap when I came, but you can't possibly count him either.

"I thought you knew all about white men in the Pacific. Why, in Tahiti, even long after it was taken and settled by those 'mounseers,' it was just the same as in all the other islands.

"A skipper would go into 'Papeete,' wanting, maybe, some ironwork repairs, and meeting with another Britisher, would inquire for the best smith. If the British workman were not in town, he was certain sure to get the answer, 'You can't get one for a day or two. Jones and Robinson are away on the other side of the island.' 'But,' would say the skipper, pointing to a workshop in full blast, and kicking up an awful hammering, 'what's that?' 'Oh,' would say the other, 'I thought you wanted a *white* man! If that's all you want, there are plenty of Frenchies and Dutchmen about here.'

"That last-mentioned name, sir, reminds me of one of the many hidings I've had to put up with in my life.

"It took place on this very beach, soon after those 'square-headed Dutchmen,' as we call all Germans, began to bother this place; and even then they carried on top ropes, as if it all belonged to them.

"Well, one of their boats was going out through the passage, across which a very wicked surf was rolling, and we were all on the look-out for a capsize.

"She got through all right, and without thinking of what sort of crowd I was in, I shouted out, 'Well done! A white man couldn't have done it better!'

"Lord have mercy! I was knocked flat on the sand in half a jiffy, with all the Dutchies in port on the top of me, thumping, kicking, biting, and tearing me to bits; and didn't they just wallop me!

"The names they called me were something awful: more than half of them no white man could understand; and the wretches never left off pummelling me on the floor till they thought it was time for more beer.

"Anyway, from that time I was very careful to look at my mob before I made any remarks about white men, that is, if I was alone. With a couple of chums I wouldn't care for a whole shipload of Dutchies."

Another glass of beer, and the old man went off at score, reeling off snatches of Samoan life; but as I specially wanted his earlier history, I interrupted the lavish flow, and with some difficulty got him back to Liverpool.

CHAPTER II.

As bad as the police.—Put yourself in the place.—A savoury birthplace.—Never had a father.—Regular friends.—Doubtful emotion.—Worse company.—Hocussed and crimped.—Mate introduces himself.—The irrevocable vow.—Kidnapped again.—Life on Yankee man-of-war.—The friendly nigger.—Sort of bosen's mate.—Despair.—The sky pilot.—A devilish compact.—Laughter in the sick bay.—Sanguinary anticipation.—Hunting a bully.—The sweat-box.—Tortured and mad.—Devil's help.—In my coffin.—The new steward.—Absent without leave.

WELL, sir, I have never told my tale to any one, as you must know. You yourself have tried before now to get me to yarn and didn't succeed; but then I didn't know you so well as I do now. We old hands on the beach looked upon the likes of you as we did the police at home—as always trying to run us in.

We all savee better now; but, besides that, I'm too old to fear any punishment, and I'm sure that what I shall now tell you will go no

further till I'm gone, and that won't be very long now.

And, sir, if you will think a little over my tale, I'm sure you will say that in the same horrible positions, and with the same cruel treatment, you yourself would have done the same as me.

Brutal men drove me mad, till I became as brutal as themselves. At all events, sir, I know I should do just the same over again, if I went through the same sort of life, and met with the same sort of men.

I first remember a very dirty back lane round about the docks at Liverpool. Quartered at the North Fort, were you? Then you'll well know the sort of place I'm yarning about.

Well, there I can recollect living with my mother, a big black woman; and at that time I thought our house splendid, but then I'd seen no other.

Father? I never had one that I can recollect. I never even thought of one. All I knew about fathers was what other boys told me—that they was the chaps what licked them.

I got quite enough lickings from the black

sailors who generally boarded at our house when they were in port, and went away almost as quickly as they came, but not before they had spent all their wages.

The only things these men were regular in was getting drunk as long as the money lasted, and whopping the boy, which was me. There was always a kick or a thump handy, and I got it.

I had to stand by all day and night to bring grog, and whether I was right or whether I was wrong, I always got licked.

My mother, I think, was fond of me; and at times, when I got a bigger thrashing than usual, she would cry over me; but to this day I'm not quite sure that the tears were not more from grog than feeling.

By-and-by I grew too big to thrash easily, and big enough to think about striking out for myself.

I presently made some money doing odd jobs at the docks and aboard the ships, and was thinking quite seriously of starting a coster-monger's barrow with another darkie, when, if possible, I got into worse company than I had been in before.

On board a ship where I was working I met a fellow who was always telling us sea yarns, and asking us to his house to have a drain.

I went two or three times, and nothing came of it; but one day, after the second glass, I recollected nothing more till I woke up, with a bursting head, in the hold of the *Eneas B. Slowman*, a Yankee barque from New York, then on her return voyage, rolling about in the open sea, well off the Lizard.

Oh! didn't I feel awfully bad! I thought I was going to die every moment. When I think of it now even, I can feel my bursting head, from the hocussing I had gone through.

At last, down came the mate; and from that moment began the long list of injuries that I avenged afterwards; for what I suffered was enough to make my wild Ashantee blood boil within me.

He, the mate, came round to the place where I was lying, more dead than alive, kicked me when I couldn't move, called me a d——d skulking nigger, and sent down a tackle and slung me up like a dog to the deck.

There, while I couldn't stand, he poured

bucket after bucket of ice-cold water over me, thrashing me between whiles with a rope's end, as he said, "to take the devil out of me."

It didn't though, but it raised one; for there, as I lay under his cowardly thumps and freezing water, I made the vows that in after years I carried out like the madman I was.

Those vows, sir, I really believe kept me alive. I got up and went to work in the middle of his sneers of having brought me to my bearings: but little did he know this child!

I saw it was no use fighting just then, so I determined to wait my time; and so well did I pretend to give in that I actually became the ship's favourite.

I thought my time and turn would come in the States, the freedom of which I had heard so much talk about, but, although disappointed, I never shifted my purpose.

At Sandy Hook, I think they call the place, we anchored, when that scamp of a mate sold us to a crimp who came off, and was allowed to take us on shore for a spree—of course to come back in the morning in time to take the ship to her berth.

The end of it was that the next day three

of us, all kidnapped from Liverpool, found ourselves with signed articles on board of the rottenest old junk I ever saw, for a three months' cruise to Monte Video and back.

There was no getting out of it, for we didn't know one bit what to do, and so had to give in once more.

The same evening we weighed anchor, as we thought for the sunny south, but soon, to our great astonishment, our old hooker ran alongside the U.S. corvette *Rappanhanock*, and we were handed over, papers and all correctly made out, just as if we were properly enlisted man-of-war men.

On board of her, I can assure you, it was hell indeed; and the life they led me there is responsible for all the bad things I did afterwards.

I never had one moment's peace. It was for ever, "You d——d nigger, here!—you cussed nigger, there!" and a blow or two with every word.

This, as you may think, didn't make me feel any more friendly towards the man who first stole me—the mate, I mean—and in my hammock, when the ship was heavily rolling from side to side in the trough of the big seas

off the Horn, I repeated my vows of vengeance to the music of the creaking, grinding timbers, whose harsh and painful grating suggested the sort of satisfaction I would take if ever I got the chance.

Life on board that ship was cruel hard, but in the end I blessed it, for it landed me in the Pacific, which I have never left since.

My word! sir, warn't the time I put in under Uncle Sam bad! It was ten times worse than on board that hooker.

There was never one single day that I didn't get kicked and punched. Even the cook in the galley, a great big greasy nigger, as black as a lump of coal, poured a can full of boiling water over me, and scalded me dreadfully.

He called me a d——d contraband—why, I don't know, for I was British born; but I never told them that but once, and gracious! the thrashing I got over those few words was awful, and it put me in the sick bay, on the shelf with broken bones, for three weeks or more.

Although the whole crew, officers and all, were bad enough, there was one man on board who was the very devil, and the chief cause of all the wrong things I have done.

He was a sort of bosen's mate—an awful big brute, who never left me with a whole skin for long; and I carry the marks of his knuckle-dusters on my body to this very day.

His eye was as sharp as an eagle's, and he always kept it on me. I do believe that he could spot me in the dark, like a cat.

If I kept out of his way, he would go for me all the same, call me a skulker, and let me have it anywhere with anything handy. Lord! how that cuss did like to thrash me!

If I met him straight, it was the same again. He would kick me out of his way for a "cussed runaway nigger"; and wasn't his talk solid, and no mistake!

In my watch below, sir, lying down, sore and bloody, from that man's cruelty, I would ask myself if there really was a merciful God at all.

At Liverpool a dock missionary (we called him sky pilot) once told me that there was a God who made no difference between black and white men; and that man took me away to a school where I was taught all about God, and I liked it.

I was at that place for about four months,

and learnt to read and write; but too soon my mother's people found me out, took me away, licked me until I couldn't stand, and there was an end of peace and God, who I thought no more about till that brute broke me up on board the cruiser.

He was the chap that jumped on me when I was knocked down for saying I was a Britisher, and smashed in my ribs as I lay thumped silly on the deck.

He swore then that he would kill me, and would have done so if the other men hadn't lugged him off.

In the sick bay, where they took me that night, aching in every bone and on fire all over, I was sure there was no God for the poor nigger. The devil got fast hold of me; and I said that in the future I would belong to him if he would help me; and before my bursting head gave way, I swore that I would have a bloody revenge for all that had been done me, and kill the man—the bosen's mate I mean—if I had to wait all my life for the chance.

How long I was off my head I don't know, but I do remember very well that whilst I was silly I thought the devil came and said, "I

heard you, John King Bruce. It's all right. You are mine now!" I wasn't afraid at all, but felt quite comforted that at last I had found a friend.

When I woke up, there was the ship's sawbones standing by my cot, and he told me to get well quick, for "by the Lord, he wasn't going to have any shamming." I remember well what I said to myself—it was: "By the devil, doctor, when I do get only a little well, there will be no shamming in what I'll do on deck."

After that dream of Satan I was quite another man, but not a better one though, and felt no longer afraid of any one, but only wanted to get well, and, with the help the devil promised me, to kill the man—the brute who tried to murder me.

I thought of nothing else night or day, and forgot all about the other men. I only wanted that bosen's mate; and didn't I feel certain of getting him!

I felt so sure of having his life's blood that I took it over and over again in a sort of dream, but all the time wide awake; and I would shout so loud with laughter, as I saw myself drawing a

knife so slowly across his throat, or sticking it right into his black heart, that I would wake up half the ship.

They all said that I was mad, but I knew I wasn't. If I was, it was only for one thing.

When sawbones came round I was quite quiet; but one day he himself caught me shouting louder than ever in my dream of joy, and he said, "You infernal nigger! If you can make that cussed row you can go to work," and he turned me out, reported fit for duty.

I said nothing whilst I dressed, but before I went up the ladder, I stole a beautiful knife from the sick bayman's locker, and hid it away in my shirt, ready for the purpose I intended to put it to.

Oh, how happy I felt when I got on deck, at the thoughts of what I was going to do!

I know it was very wrong, sir; and I think that the men who heard me laughing were right, for I see now that I must have been mad, but it was on that one thing only, and that my new friend, the devil, would not let me forget.

I soon got amongst the men, who began once more to treat me as they always had done before, but I took no notice of them. My game

was not the likes of them, for I wanted that bosen's mate, and hadn't the devil promised me him?

I didn't say one word, but walked quietly round the ship, looking for my friend, and found him nowhere.

I then asked where he was; when the man laughed, and answered, "Snowball! You must get some other chap to jump on you now, as dat bosen's mate ran away at Valparaiso," where the ship had stopped during my sickness.

What I did then I don't know at all for some time, but it appears I did my work without knowing much about it.

When I began to think again, I noticed that the men fought quite shy of me, and stopped treating me so roughly as they used to.

I suppose I looked too dangerous for them to deal safely with; anyhow, I know I felt so, and they were quite right. I was as dangerous as I could be; I was so mad at losing that bosen's mate.

One evening, as I was sitting on the combing of the hatchway, just alongside the ladder, up came one of the worst rowdies in the ship half-drunk, and, putting his foot on my back,

sent me sprawling all along the deck on my nose.

In an instant I was up, knife in hand, and went for him.

He drew his at once, but before I could get at him, he took fright, turned round and scuttled up the deck, with me after him like lightning, yelling like blazes, for I had gone mad again, and wanted to kill him.

Golly! how that coward did run! He could kick a man that he thought would not turn on him, but was afraid to meet a poor sick nigger, half his size, in fair fight.

I flew after him as he ran round the deck, and some of the men tried to stop me, but with my long knife I slashed at them right and left, and burst my way through, until at last a crack from a marline-spike on the head knocked me bleeding and senseless to the deck.

When I came round, I found myself ironed hand and foot, with the ship's pump firing water all over me, and as soon as the officer of the watch saw me wake up, he said, "Lug the d——d black scoundrel down to the 'sweat-box.'" Perhaps you don't know what that is, sir? No? Well, I'll tell you.

You know the Yanks brag that they never flog a man; but they do much worse. They have punishments that drive men mad, and shoot them like dogs if they show fight.

Well, this sweat-box, as they call it, is a sort of cell right down below in the bilge, in the lowest part of the ship, and only big enough for a man to stand upright in, pitch dark, and hot as hell.

In this they lock a man up, just over the stinking bilge water, scarcely able to breathe, and with the perspiration rolling off him in rivers, till they have taken the devil out of him, as they always say.

It didn't take it out of me though, for I was worse when I came out than when I went in, but I didn't let on about it.

To this awful place they dragged me, wet through and ironed as I was, and the carpenter shackled me to the wall with my arms as high up as they would go, till I was only just standing on my toes with my face to the wall.

"There, you d——d black nigger!" said the officer, "that will teach you to draw a knife on a white man." He then fetched me a tearing kick and left.

Soon I could scarcely breathe; I felt myself boiling; my wet clothes hung on me scalding hot, and the air was quite thick with the steam from them.

I presently got wild, and how I did curse and swear, and called upon my friend the devil to take me; to sink the ship; to do anything; but all the time I never forgot that bosen's mate.

I screamed, and tore, and twisted at my arms, tied above my head, until my wrists cracked, and I felt the scalding blood pouring down on my face, hotter than the boiling sweat pouring off me in buckets.

I swung on my arms with roars of pain and rage, right off the floor, and with my bare feet kicked against the sides of the cursed place till all my toes were smashed, and my strength was gone. All the time the irons burnt through my arms and legs as though they were red hot.

The tortures of the damned I've heard talk about, but they couldn't be worse than what I went through; but at last I was quite done, the pain stopped, and I hung by my wrists almost in comfort, and wanted to go to sleep.

Now I said to myself, "Thank you, Mr. Devil! I'm going to die now. You heard what

I said; but it's very hard to go home without squaring accounts with that bosen's mate," for I thought of no one else but that man.

I suppose it was the hot blood that was running out of me that eased me, and made me feel so nice and sleepy, and at last I began to sing like a child, and then I recollect nothing until I found myself—where do you think, sir?

Why, in my hammock; but this journey it was meant to be my coffin, and not my bed.

They thought I was dead, and the sailmaker had got more than half-way through sewing me up, before chucking me overboard, when a prick of his needle woke me.

The man gave a big shout, ran off, and thought the devil had surely come for him, and he wasn't far wrong.

By-and-by they cut me loose, poured water over me, and all those awful pains came back, which soon put me off my head, so I was taken to the sick bay again, where I stopped a long time, till I was strong enough to crawl about the deck once more.

All that time I spoke to no one, and no one spoke to me, for I think they were ashamed of walloping a poor weak nigger so, but all the

same I was waiting my time; the devil told me it must come, and he didn't let me forget; but the first man I wanted was that bosen's mate.

I soon got stronger and able to do a little work, so they put me to assist the gun-room steward, wash the plates, and help the cook.

I kept main quiet, and worked so well that the officers began to like me, and got me to do little jobs for them in their berths.

Plenty of times we called in at South American ports, but they would not let me go ashore, nor any others like me who had been kidnapped; they were afraid we might run away, and they were right.

I got on better and better, till the officers of the mess and the steward would trust me with anything; but they did not know how I hated them all; and just before we came to Callao, the steward fell sick, and I took his place for the time.

Of course, when a ship is in port, the messes want vegetables and other things, and always send their stewards on shore to market for them; so when we got to anchor, thinking I had forgotten all, I was let go for supplies.

They didn't think of all they had done to

me, and they forgot about that bosen's mate; but I remembered all, every little bit, and made up my mind that once on shore the ship should see me no more.

They gave me dollars to buy the things, but that was not enough for me: I knew where there was more money, and watches, and chains, and rings, and pins; so before I went ashore, I went through the kind gentlemen's boxes, and what I left was not worth much.

If they had only caught me, I should never have got out of that sweat-box alive that time; but they didn't. So I got ashore with the other stewards.

I soon managed to lose them, threw my basket away, and bolted out of town as hard as I could.

CHAPTER III.

Callao chorus.—Gentle acquaintances.—Trust in the devil.—The champion slaughterer.—Persuasion to pay.—Working out the bill.—A well remembered voice.—That bosen's mate.—Chance for revenge.—Tables turned.—"Thank you, Satan!"—Madder and madder.—Score settled in blood.—A new friend.—A Blackbirder.—Not the "Jolly Roger."—A fifty-dollar murder.—Another one for spite.—"Not my knife."—Summary execution.—A shark worry.—Take the murdered man's place.

I DIDN'T know then the Callao hymn, of which the chorus is—"On no condition is extradition allowed in Callao,"—and was afraid that the police might nab me, and send me back, so I got away as far as I could into the country till the vessel left.

I went a long way, till I couldn't see the coast, and stopped four months at a dirty little village, in a Yankee nigger's house, who spoke English; and didn't he rob me!

There were half a dozen other ruffians there,

of all sorts and nationalities, each one with a pistol and large knife stuck in his sash.

Bless you, sir, bad as I felt, I was as nothing to that crowd! But I wasn't afraid. I'd robbed the ship, and would have killed that bosen's mate at sight on board, in defiance of all consequences, and all that was then wanted was to mix with these chaps for awhile to be fit for any villainy.

All day and night these chaps did nothing but play cards and fight over them; they talked nothing but brandy, murder, and robbery; and when they got drunk, they would cut and shoot one another like fun.

The devil, I thought, still stuck to me. All I wished for was to be as comfortably bad as my companions, and in a short time I was.

I didn't care now about anything: bought pistol and knife, drank, played cards, swore and fought with the best of them.

Soon they got nearly all my money; so one morning, before they were sober, I made tracks for the town, and was glad to see that my ship was gone.

What an awful lot the chaps in Callao were in those days! They were of all nations under

the sun, mixed up together, all armed and always drinking.

There was shooting and knifing always going on, which nobody took any notice of but those in the row; and if a man got stretched in a grog shop, the "boss" would only throw him out into the road, whether dead or alive.

If you once got into some of these saloons, as they called them, you never came out without a fight, if you had a cent left.

In the middle of all this I wasn't afraid, for something inside told me that my friend the devil would take care of me till I found my man.

In a very few days my money was nearly all gone, and one day I found myself stretched out on the floor of one of the worst saloons in the place, run by a great big black, who had killed more men than any other chap in Callao.

I was dreadful bad all over, and sung out for some more rum, which was brought to me by the boss himself.

"Now then, fork out your dollar, and look slippy," he shouted. But I couldn't find one anywhere, for some one had gone through my pockets while I was asleep. "Got no money!"

he roared; then out he pulled his pistol, and pointed it at my head.

I thought it was all over with me then, as I looked right down the barrel, poked close to my nose. "D—mn you!" said he; "I've half a mind to kill you; and if you were not my colour, by the devil! I would."

I knew then, somehow, that I was safe, for that gentleman was my friend.

"Hold up your hands quick!" shouted the big brute, "while I see what you have got about you; and if I find that you have gone back on me, by the holy! I'll cut your throat. I'm not going to be robbed." And then, with his pistol stuck in my face, he searched me all over, but found nothing but a pistol and knife.

"I don't allow no pistol weapons here!" he screamed; "mine's enough for all the fighting in this house;" and as he took it away, he seemed to get in a worse rage than ever: his big red eyes stood right out of his head, and he foamed at the mouth like a mad dog.

"No, by Heaven! I'm not going to be cheated out of my dollars by a thing like you!" he howled; "I earn my money hard enough, and has to fight for it. You shan't rob me, you

black thief! You shall work out the bill, d—mn you! or I'll serve you the same as the last chap here."

"Anything you like, boss," I said, "only don't kill me;" for I was mortal afraid that his pistol would go off, he was shaking so much with rage and rum.

He then, with awful curses, set me to work washing up a pile of bottles in the backyard, right in the blazing sun, and I didn't dare refuse for fear, and set to.

That afternoon suddenly I heard a voice inside the house, kicking up a thundering row. I knew it in a moment—I knew it belonged to that bosen's mate; and I felt that my friend the devil was at last about to perform his promise; he appeared to whisper so to me, and to tell me not to forget mine.

Then my whole body began to smart with the recollection of the kicks and licks that chap used to give me on board ship. I knew it was all fancy, but I assure you, sir, I felt them just as I did when I got them; but I seemed to like it, for all these pains made me mad to settle the long account between us.

I crept up to the window and peeped in.

Yes! There was that bosen's mate, respectably togged out as a skipper, drinking rum, half drunk, but getting worse and worse every minute.

"Thank you, my friend Satan! Thank you very much! I know that I shall be square with that cuss before night, and then you may do what you like with me; only you keep your promise and I'll keep mine."

I then went back to my bottles, and drank off a lot of dregs I'd drained out of them.

They made me so excited that I couldn't wait till night, so I crept back to the window again, and for a long time watched my man pouring down glass after glass of the fiery stuff, that the boss was plying him with as quick as he asked for it.

Golly! wasn't that chap strong! He tossed off the raw rum like water, and it appeared to take no grip of him at all.

At last he began to stagger, and after fetching a roll or two, down he went on the floor dead drunk, when the boss left him and went out.

Here was the chance I'd waited for so long. I drew my big knife, and quietly crept,

on and on, slowly, like a snake, for fear I should disturb his innocent slumbers, till at last I stood alongside the man I so wanted—the man the devil gave me—the man who had made me what I was and what I was going to be.

There he lay—I can see him now—looking so strong and so able to crush me between his finger and thumb, as he would have done had he been awake and sober.

But who was strongest now?—the poor, weak little sick nigger, with a long, sharp knife, and standing up, or the great, big white bully asleep on the floor?

Oh, I knew! and how I thanked rum and the devil for being so good to me and giving their help to make me the master!

I looked at the chap for a long time, and thought, and thought, and thought of all the brute had done me.

Each thing as it came to my mind made me hotter and hotter, madder and madder, till at last I dropped down on my knees by his side, just as if I was going to pray for him.

My friend the devil was there, close at my elbow, and he told me, "Look sharp, Bruce, or you will lose him again." I said to myself,

"No fear, good devil"; and I leant over him and felt for the place where his black heart ought to be.

It went thump, thump, thump, so nice and strong; but I was soon going to alter that!

He felt me touch him, his eyes opened, his lips said, "More rum, boss," and he began to get up; but just as his eyes met mine, and I could see that he recognised me, I drove my knife right through him, as I said, "You won't want no more rum this side of hell, bosen's mate."

With a big screech, he tumbled back dead; and, oh, how I did laugh!—I laughed till I thought I should burst.

Soon a tired and sleepy feeling came over me, and I laid down beside him, to rest a little.

I liked him then, for he was dead, quiet, and owed me nothing; and his blood was so pretty and red—just the same colour as mine, although I was a nigger, and he had seen that pretty often.

At last I fell asleep, and when I woke up, my head was cool again, and I began to think what I should do next.

I felt quite easy in my mind now, but knew

that I must shift camp, for I was afraid that when the boss came back he would make short work of me.

I had no money, but soon found some: the dead man gave me his, as he had no further use for it; and I also took his pistol and knife, but left mine,—he looked so comfortable with it sticking in him.

After a big drink of rum, mad as I could be, I rushed off down the street till I came to the harbour, where lots of ships were riding at anchor, and falling down behind a rock, I fell asleep.

The devil again came to me that night, and said, "You're mine altogether now, Bruce; but never mind that, I don't want you just yet; there's plenty for you to do before you come home, and nothing shall harm you till you're full up."

Just then came a big kick, and I told the devil not to do that again, as I wanted more sleep.

Bang came another at once, and turning round, in a big rage, I saw, not the devil, but a tall man, with one eye, and a big black beard, who inquired what I was doing there.

I answered, "Can't you see I'm sleeping? And I want more; so hook it."

He looked like a skipper of one of the ships, and was just going away, when I called out after him, "Want any hands on board your ship?"

"That I do, my lad. Are you for a cruise amongst the islands,—all sunshine, fun, grog, and dollars?"

"All right," I answered; "I'm your man; but I want to be off at once."

"Oho!" said he. "Killed any one particular?" I nodded as he continued,—"Never mind that, my lad, it won't make you any the worse sailor, I'll be bound, and killing is no new thing here. There she lies," said he, pointing to a wicked-looking barque in the offing, "Isn't she a beauty?"

He then turned off the beach to go up the street, but I objected to go back.

"Corpse lives up that way, perhaps," he remarked. "But it don't matter a cent; we can get what we want down here just as well." And off we struck for a grog shop close at hand, where he filled me up with as much rum as I could drink, put me in a boat, and sent me off to the ship.

I can just recollect getting there, and that's all; but the next morning I woke up in an almost dark fo'c's'le, very sick, and in the middle of a lot of men, lying around, ironed hand and foot, groaning and cursing in the most horrible manner.

I knew what was the matter with them: they had been hocussed in the grog shanties on shore, kidnapped and sold to the ship, just as I had been at Liverpool.

Presently the door opened, and in came the skipper with, "Well, my lad, how goes it?"

"Main bad" said I. And then some of the chaps in irons began to curse him anyhow, in all sorts of lingo.

His face got black as thunder at once, and he set to kicking them without mercy.

"Wait, my boys, till I get you into blue water; I'll very quickly take the devil out of you. But, Bruce," said he, "I want to talk to you, so come aft."

Going along the deck, one look was enough to tell me that I had again got into a very tight place.

The crew was an awful looking lot of pirates: they were niggers as black as myself,

whites and yellow men of all sorts; some with long beards, others with none; but every one carried a long knife stuck in his sash, and the lingo they jabbered I couldn't make anything at all out of.

The ship was very dirty, but well found, and armed with four carronades on each side, and a "long Tom" trained fore and aft in the bows.

I looked up to the peak, fully expecting to see the "Jolly Roger" flying, but, instead of that, there was the Peruvian ensign.

"Now, Bruce," said the skipper, "I suppose you will join us all right?"

"Yes, cap.," said I; "I would go with the very devil himself. I belong to him now, body and soul, so I don't care for anything."

"And, Bruce, who do you think it was you stretched yesterday?"

"I know," I returned, "I know very well; and I'd kill him again to-morrow, if he came alive and gave me the chance."

"That's the spirit I like, my lad; you'll do for us. Won't he, boys? But, you know, Bruce, you have killed the best blackbirder in the whole Pacific. He was a trimmer, he was, and no mistake. He never spoke twice

to any man. I was his mate once, when he gouged this eye out, because I wanted to go on shore. Anyway, my boy, you've squared that account for me. But it's lucky for you there's a little strip of blue water between you and shore; all his crew are out to fix the chap who killed their captain. There will be an awful row to-night; and if they don't find him, I shouldn't wonder if they corpsed that black bully who runs the saloon where you stuck him."

"I don't care, cap.; now I've begun, I'll kill any other man that wants it. I belong to the devil now for good, and he'll let me go till I'm wanted."

"That's right, darkie; clap your name to this and you're one of us."

I wrote my name on a sort of paper; then the skipper gave me back my knife, and shouting to a chap called José, he told him to give me some grog and put me in his watch.

That's the way I got on board a Peruvian kidnapper, whose trade was to steal poor devils of natives from the islands, and sell them for labour in the silver mines. This trade is called blackbirding.

Well, sir, at last we left that hell-upon-earth, Callao; but I soon found that I had only changed it for another sort of one, for if ever there was a floating hell, it was my new craft.

I didn't mind it, though, for we got plenty of grog; and we drank and fought just as much as ever we liked.

It was all round a word and a blow, and there was scarcely ever a day that some one didn't get cut. All the pistols the skipper and mates took away from us, or there would have been more murder than there was.

This trip I was the man that everybody feared, and no one liked to annoy me after the first week afloat, for all who had tackled me had come to grief; and oh, how well I thought the devil did fight for me!

One day I quarrelled purposely with, and killed, the biggest bully in the ship, in fair fight, before the whole crew. In that row the skipper backed me for fifty dollars with the first mate, who didn't like losing the money. He hated me like poison for this, and bullied me like fun every time he could, and he could pretty nearly any time.

He made my mad blood boil plenty of times,

and itch to get at him only once; but it was no use fighting the officers, for they gave their orders with a pistol ready, and the crew had only their knives, so we were obliged to knock under. However, I waited my time, and watched that mate like a cat.

One very dark night, when, unsteadied by the slightest breath of wind, the vessel heaved and surged on the black, greasy swells, which shook and twirled her round and round just as they pleased, to the tune of the masts creaking and the flapping of the useless sails, my opportunity arrived.

Every one was asleep,—the watch above and below, the man at the wheel, the skipper, the mates,—every one but me.

Again the devil came—I didn't see him, but I felt he was near me.

He said, "Now's your time, Bruce." And up I jumped, quietly crept aft, dodging from gun to gun, keeping close to the bulwarks,—for I knowed that sometimes the skipper prowled about at night,—till I got to the hammock of the mate, slung under the break of the poop, as his cabin was too hot.

He didn't think then that he was so near to

going off to a much hotter place; but I did, as I cut his throat to the very bone.

He made no noise; I was too quick and the knife too sharp. He was dead in an instant.

I ran back, but left the knife there. You think I was a fool to do so? Oh, no! It was another man's I did the work with, and as the owner slept in the fo'c's'le alongside of me, I put some of the bright red blood on his hands. No! I was too sly to take my own knife.

I felt mad again,—the sight of the blood made me so,—and I laughed myself to sleep over the shindy I knew there would be in the morning, and to think how the wrong man would get in for it.

Just as I thought, the row began the first thing in the morning. At daybreak I was roused up by the mates rushing in and seizing the man the knife belonged to. I tumbled out, and helped them put him in irons; and how all the time I did laugh to myself!

There was the blood on his hands, and there was the knife found in the mate's throat, so he must have done it! Besides which, I told the skipper that I woke up in the night and saw the chap's hammock empty.

The skipper thought a little, then, turning round to us, said, "What do you say, boys?" I sung out, "He must have done it"; and with that he up pistol and shot the fellow through the neck. He fell screeching into the water with a big splash, when, in a moment, three sharks, which had been following us for days, seized him, and began to tear him up. We all stood watching them open their enormous jaws, shining with teeth as sharp as razors, and shut them upon the poor chap's body and limbs, as, still alive, he tried to swim back to the ship. Then they tugged and worried away like bull dogs, till the man was broken in sunder, and the smooth sea was red all round with blood—the colour that always drove me mad; but the devil had me, and I didn't care.

We then threw the mate over, just as he was, hammock, knife, and all, as no one would have anything to do with an unlucky weapon; and a few buckets of water put things all right again.

After all was over, the skipper sent for me to have a talk. I always knew that he liked me, but I didn't think that he would have asked

me to be his mate; but he did though, and of course I said I would, for then I should get back my pistol, and be stronger than ever.

"D—mn the navigation!" said the skipper; "I can do that. You're just the man I want, so come along."

I did, and fetched my traps from the fo'c's'le to the captain's cabin, where I took up my quarters in the spare berth.

I said to myself the first night, "This place will be very hot before I sling my hammock outside for cool; the accident to the mate this morning will be a warning to me, for there may be some more dangerous people forrard."

Oh! how I laughed again when I thought of how the skipper took me to be his friend, when I was nobody's friend; but he had no devil to tell him that.

The other two mates didn't like this at all; but that was no matter: they were both afraid of me, and then, I was armed as well as they were.

All the ship was afraid of me except the skipper, and he thought I was his dear friend!

I left off drinking now. I knew too much what would be the consequence if any one caught me napping—I should have followed the first mate. No; I kept a sharp look-out, and never slept outside the cabin.

CHAPTER IV.

A beautiful island.—Friendly preparations.—Neglected overtures.—Innocent morning call.—A most horrid sight.—Man-eating pigs.—"Enough of blackbirding."—A burnt town.—Quieting a baby.—The skipper's evil taunt.—Personal reflection.—A smoking island.—Preparations for visitors.—Stones, shot, and manacles.—Quite a missionary.—The kindest man in the world.—Pretty canoe fleet.—Bright flowers and light hearts.—Bait for "blackbirds."—Securing the "game."—Mad again.—The rope of blood.—Sharks and oysters.—Grog discipline.—A return visit.—Skipper's fiery eye.—"Dead niggers no good."

CONTINUING our voyage, we at last came to a beautiful little island, so very pretty and looking so cool, even in the hot sun, with its bright white beach, sparkling and laughing, with the lovely blue waters, and the cocoanut trees, in the light breeze, shaking their big green arms over all.

It was the first island that I ever saw, and it looked so quiet and peaceful that I wished I was not so bad, and that I could stop there and rest.

I thought then, however, that it was no use, as I belonged to the devil, and must go on till he stopped me; I know better now; but I was mortal bad then.

We went close to the reef, dropped anchor, and waited for the natives to come off and see us; in the meantime, we got ready for the visit.

We first got out all kinds of pretty calicoes, beads, and knives, to show them and entice them to come on board; and then we got ready short bits of line, to tie them up, when once we got them over the side.

Afterwards we got heavy shot and stones from the ballast, to heave into the canoes and break them up, to prevent their getting away; and lastly we put our boats in the water, on the far side of the ship, in readiness to come round and pick the birds out of the sea before they could swim on shore.

We waited a long time, but no natives came off. There was no smoke on shore, and nothing could be seen that showed there was any one there, so the skipper began to growl and swear.

At last he got impatient. "D—mn them!" said he; "if they won't come to us, we'll go to

them." So we manned and armed two boats, and off we rowed.

After travelling about two miles, we came right in front of a long clearing, and sticking out of it were a lot of what we took to be black poles.

The skipper, as soon as he saw them, swore worse than ever, and said, "We shall get no men in this place; somebody has been here before us. All the people belonging here have gone for a cruise in another ship. Wonder who's been here? It must be that cuss 'Martinez,' from 'Coquimbo.' I never thought he could have got ready in time. Anyway, we'll take a look round."

We then landed, and leaving two men in each boat, the rest of the mob, with their guns all ready, stepped off for the clearing.

As we got near, there was an awful stink, which grew stronger and stronger till we came to the edge of the small bushes growing all round the clearing, and then we saw the cause of it.

Here, there, and everywhere—in twos, and threes, and bunches, with limbs all twisted and stiffened, bloated and blistered, in the scorching

sun—were the dead bodies of a lot of natives, men, women, and children, all looking so horrible and smelling awful. They were all black people. Did you ever see a dead black man? Well, you know what he looks like; and these were worse than I ever saw.

In the middle of them was a drove of wild pigs from the bush, scarcely able to move after their horrible feast.

They were so gorged that they would hardly stir, but sat and looked at us, as silly as a lazy chap does when you wake him out of a comfortable sleep.

All turned quite sick at this sight, and got out of the way as quick as possible. I began to think that I had had quite enough of black-birding; and glad I am to say that I never saw such a sight as that again, but perhaps some ship that followed ours did.

A little further on were the black sticks we saw coming in; and, as the skipper knew, we found them to be the posts of the houses burnt by the men who did the killing.

Here again there were more dead men, but they were burnt, and did not look so bad. All the live ones left, no doubt, had been taken

away to work in the Peruvian mines, never more to return.

Just here I came across the body of a poor little pickaninny, all broken to pieces, and on a cocoanut tree close by was the splash where his brains had been dashed out. The baby was no good for work, but the mother was, and that was the way the chaps separated them.

I was bad man enough then, goodness knows, but all this was too much even for me, so I went back and sat down in the boat, feeling quite sick.

Soon the other men returned, having scoured the place all round, and reported that, except pigs, there was nothing left alive.

The skipper came last, and looking me right straight in the face, said, "What's the matter with you, Bruce? Want to go home to your mammy? Eh?" And his one eye glittered like mad as he touched his pistol.

I knew what that meant, and said nothing but that I felt ill from the sun.

He answered, "All right"; but from that time I saw that he suspected and watched me.

He thought me all bad, but, thank the

Lord! there was some little good left to save me years after when I met with good men.

We took a few cocoanuts on board, and, lifting anchor, left that fearful place.

On leaving we steered due west, and on the third day were in the middle of a lot of islands, all round us like a necklace, but with no one to be seen on them.

Cruising slowly, we travelled amongst them, anchoring at night if the water was not too deep, and if it was, we shortened sail and kept a good look-out for rocks.

All this time my dear friend the skipper looked after me like a child, and never left me alone for a moment.

If I went forrard and spoke to the crew, he was very soon alongside of me; and if I cottoned with the mates, he cottoned too; altogether he gave me no chance to make friends, and he knew well that all on board hated me.

I thought of killing him some day, but was afraid that the rest of the gang would be sure to kill me, for I had fought them all too hard to make friends easy, and the mates were so awfully jealous.

No. I came to the conclusion that as long as he lived I should live, but with him dead there would be no more John King Bruce; so I kept quiet, but knew that the end of all this was not very far off, and could see that he was of the same opinion.

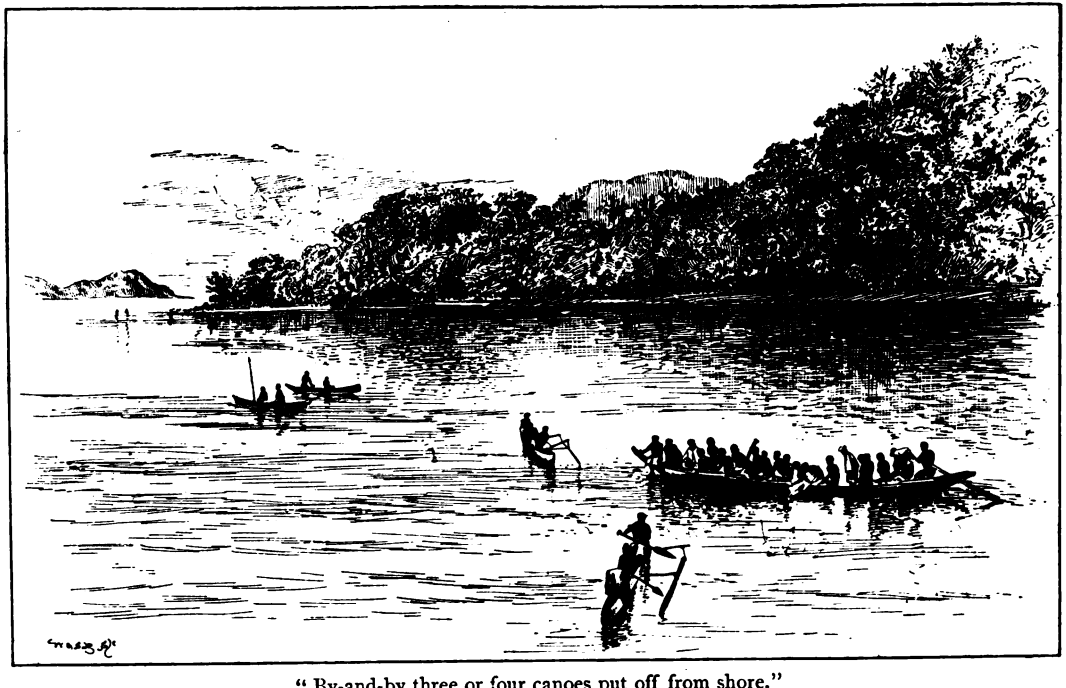
About the fifth day we came to a big island,—I don't know the name, but it was somewhere in the North Pacific,—and found plenty of people on it.

It was a great, tall place, with a lofty mountain in the middle, smoking all day, and at night looking like a lighthouse in the sky.

The trees, white beach, and the blue water were just the same as in the first island, but there was more of everything.

Again we got ready the stones, shot, ropes, and pretty calicoes, and then quietly dropped down to an anchorage, with the British flag flying at the peak.

I didn't like that at all, but I dursn't speak. By-and-by three or four canoes put off from shore, and the skipper, who had been looking at them through his glasses, suddenly shouted out, "Put away those stones and shot; stow everything, and hoist in the boats."



"By-and-by three or four canoes put off from shore."

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He hadn't been blackbirding so long for nothing, and had too much "savee" to kill the goose who laid the golden eggs.

He saw that the canoes had women and children in them, as well as men, and that told him they wished to be friendly.

What was the good of a few people to him to-day when by making friends he could get a much bigger mob to-morrow? So when they came near he looked very pleasant, and showed them all sorts of pretty cloth, knives, axes, choppers, and made signs for them to come on board.

At first they were afraid, and kept the canoes a long way off, but at last three men jumped overboard, swam to the ship, and ran up the cable like monkeys.

We all went to see them, but the skipper sung out, "Stand back there, you fools! they won't come if you crowd them."

When they got to the top of the rail, they came no farther, and sat there for some time, all ready for a jump back into the water.

The wily old skipper knew what to do, and went up alone, holding out a big red handkerchief, and smiling and grinning all over

his ugly mug, just as if he was the kindest man in the world.

However, he couldn't get them to come any nearer. They stopped up there on the rail, took the things with a snatch, but stood by for a jump, and the canoes still kept well away.

The cunning boss then went back, and returned soon with some biscuits, holding them out and eating one himself.

They took and eat them, and after a little talk, came down on deck, but always ready for a bolt overboard.

When the grub was finished, the oldest of them pointed his finger at the flag, and said, "Mishionaree?" And the foxy old skipper then grinned again as he nodded his wicked head, and said, "Yes, Mishionaree."

By-and-by they thought all was right, eat some more biscuit, drank some water out of the scuttlebutt, and, after shaking hands with the skipper and the mates, went to the side, sung out for the canoes to come up, and soon there were about twenty of these people on board, men, women, and children, eating biscuit and thoroughly enjoying themselves.

We made signs that we wanted water. They

signed back there was plenty on shore. We said we would come the next day. They nodded "all right." And then they went on shore, each with some little present, to tell their people what a nice, kind lot of white men they were on board the big ship.

There was very little grog that night, as the skipper said we wanted cool heads for the next day.

In the morning, the first thing, away went the boats with the casks for water, and when we got ashore, the natives showed us the river, helped us to fill up, and brought us oranges, bananas, and all sorts of good things.

We were invited to go to the town and drink "kava," but the skipper had forbidden us to go till the next day.

When we were full, we started off back to the ship, with canoes all round us, loaded down to the gunnel with yams, taro, oranges, bananas, fish, and all sorts of good things, to barter for cloth, knives, and axes.

The men, women, and children, dressed in their best, all over beautiful flowers, sang their liveliest songs as they paddled along with us.

When we got alongside, the casks were

hoisted out, but the men did not leave the boat, and I could see that while we were away all the stones, shot, and lashings had been brought on deck again, and covered over with sails.

The poor devils crowded on board at once, to get the good things the white man had brought them, and the skipper, he was so kind!

They got so friendly that presently a lot of them were persuaded to go down below, and get some better stuff, and then the skipper sent me to my boat, with orders to rush out as soon as he fired his pistol.

We hadn't to wait long before bang it went, and, my word! wasn't there a row then!

On deck the hatches were clapped on, and at the same time crash, crash went the stones and shot, smashing up the canoes like paper.

All round the ship the islanders were jumping off like mad; but we were there to drag them into the boat, and tie them up as fast as we could; and if they tried to escape, a crack on the head soon quieted them.

The excitement was too much for me. I lost my head again, shouted and yelled like a demon, and danced upon the poor beggars lying tied on the bottom of the boat.

Just then one big fellow broke loose on board ship, jumped over, and away he started for shore, swimming at an awful rate.

They began to shoot at him from the ship; then I remembered my pistol, and, as he passed me, I shot him dead, all for nothing.

He threw up his arms, and as he went down, down, down in the deep, clear water, I saw the blood pouring out of the bullet-hole as he sank, and making in the bright blue water a big red rope, and I thought, mad as I was, that I would get hold of the top end, and pull him up again.

With a shout, I jumped for it, and swam round and round, trying to catch the thing, but was at last hauled into the boat, and thrown down amongst the prisoners at the bottom.

In a short time, when the row was over, I got all right, and we went back to the ship.

There I found, tied up everywhere, men, women, and children, with their fine clothes torn off, and their pretty flowers smashed all over the deck in the fight.

Down below were lots more, crying and wailing in the dark.

As soon as possible we lifted anchor, and

put to sea, for the skipper didn't think it prudent to stop the night so near shore, and he said that he didn't think his "passengers," as he called them, would care to jump overboard out of sight of land, and that if they did the boats could soon grab them again.

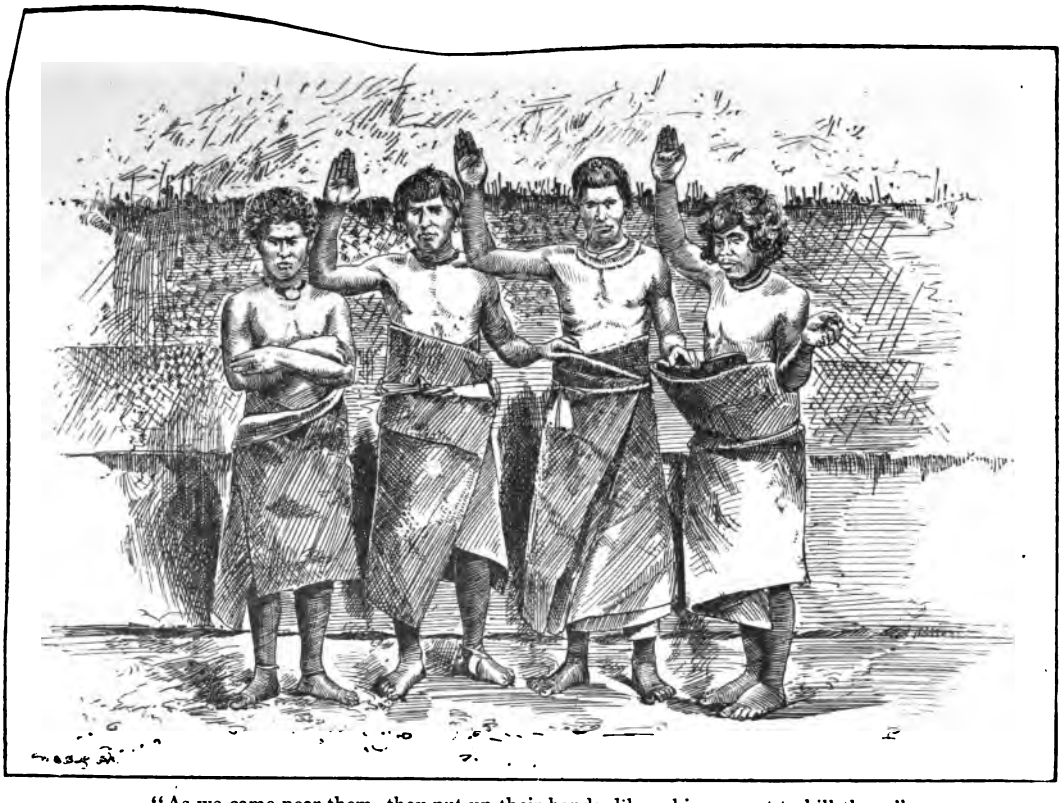
We did nothing all that night but stand straight away from shore, and in the morning, when it was not in sight, we took in all sail, and set to work to make our visitors at home.

The poor devils looked very wild, all tied up anyhow on deck, just as they were caught, and their great big eyes were starting out of their heads with fright: they thought, I'm sure, that we were going to eat them.

We then set to work taking off their lashings; and time it was, too, for the lines had cut right into their very flesh; and we put on comfortable irons instead.

When we had made all fast on deck, we went for the chaps down below, and found them all of a heap in the dark, moaning and groaning like stuck calves; and as we came near them, they put up their hands, like asking us not to kill them.

No fear of our doing that while they were



"As we came near them, they put up their hands, like asking us not to kill them."

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worth from forty to fifty dollars apiece alive, to sell to the Peruvian miners; but I think that if they had known the sort of life they were going to lead they would rather be dead.

These gave us no bother at all, and were so done up with fright that we ironed them down to the ringbolts, put there for that purpose, without any trouble.

Whilst coming up the ladder, we heard an awful rumpus going on amongst the women on deck, and then splash! splash! in the water.

That was the skipper throwing the small pickaninnies overboard, which he said were good for nothing, and not worth a cent; so the sharks gobbled them up, one by one, as they came over, just like swallowing oysters.

Golly! how the women howled and cried! They went quite mad, and tore at their irons till the blood ran all over their arms and breasts; but it was no use, their chains wouldn't let them jump over and save their children.

Soon everything was quiet, and when we counted up how many passengers we had got, we found that, after all the fuss, there were only forty-two.

The skipper was furious at this, and called

us all the d——d fools in the world, and plenty of other names, for not getting more.

He swore and cursed till he was scarcely able to stand, and then went to his cabin for a bit.

He thought he would have filled up the ship at that place, and got so savage because he hadn't.

By-and-by out he came again amongst us, and was quite friendly. "Never mind, boys," said he; "better luck next time. We'll go back to that place to-morrow night, and fetch them out of their houses; they shan't best us."

All that day we drifted about just how the sea chose to take us, and the skipper gave the men so much grog that they were soon all drunk, and lying about the ship like pigs.

That was the way he always worked these devils, for he knew that with little grog they got quarrelsome, but with plenty they became drunk and quiet, and slept.

The next day all grog was stopped, sail was made, and with a sharp look-out from the foremast head, we stood in again for the island.

When it hove in sight, we stopped, as we didn't want the natives to see us coming back.

By this time they must surely have thought that we had gone off for good, and would keep up no watch, but if they had seen us returning, they would have all taken to the bush, and we should have had our trouble for nothing.

What we wanted to do was to get up close in the dark, surround the town, and catch the whole boiling.

When it was dark enough, we stood in nearer and nearer, till we heard the breakers booming on the big reef; then we lowered the boats, armed the crews with muskets and cutlasses, and each chap carried small bits of line, to tie up any one he might catch.

The oars were all muffled, and not a word was spoken, as we followed in the wake of the skipper's boat.

On shore we could see the lights of the town brightly burning against the dark hillside, and every now and then they would seem to twinkle, as the natives, moving about, passed to and fro in front of them; so we thought it best to wait a little until they had got tired of the open air and had gone to their houses to sleep.

We waited a long time, until our men began to grumble in their hurry to begin.

At last they swore they would wait no longer, and in spite of my telling them to shut up and be quiet, as the skipper knew best, they rowed up to his boat and told him the same.

Didn't he look ugly neither! His hand went straight to the pistol stuck in his sash, but he saw in a moment that game wouldn't do, for the men had guns, and looked as if they meant to use them, too; so, shoving his weapon back, with a big oath, he said, with a very doubtful smile on his face, "Well, boys, we'll go on in a minute, so don't kick up a row."

After that, he turned to me and said, "You, Bruce, come along in my boat; I want to speak to you; and José there can take charge of yours."

I didn't like that arrangement at all; it looked very dangerous; but I knew that if I didn't go he would fetch me, and as the men were not friendly to me, I said nothing, but moved quietly on.

He didn't say another word, but made signs for me to sit down in front of him, when he brought his ugly nose close to mine, and looked me through and through with that devilish one eye of his.

He came so close that it seemed to bore me through like a gimlet, and I felt his hot breath on my face as scalding as boiling water.

All the time he looked at me so close I could do nothing; it didn't last long, but quite long enough; and when he took his hellish face away, I got all right again.

His snaky eye completely fascinated me; but as soon as he left off his horrible stare, I felt I was just as good as him, so long as I kept my pistol, and I determined to keep a sharp look-out, and fire first if I saw him coming for me.

All the way to shore he never said a single word, but I could see that his mind was made up to get rid of me at the first chance, for he thought that I had tried to make those chaps in the boat cantankerous, and meant to kill me first if they mutinied.

The town fires were getting smaller and smaller, as we moved slowly and quietly towards shore, till they looked no bigger than little shivering stars stuck in the great black wall.

Right up above was the burning mountain, with a big red-hot cloud in the sky on top of it,

and it was groaning, growling, and spitting out showers of sparks like mad.

Presently the skipper got the boats together, and said, quite low, "Mind, boys, I don't want any shooting, unless we have to fight. Dead niggers are no good. I want live ones, and then there will be plenty of dollars for all of us when we get back. And, by the Holy! I'll kill the first man who fires a shot until I tell him. Just you all mind what I say."

We then landed about a quarter of a mile above the town, and struck off on a bush track leading to it.

CHAPTER V.

Simile of darkness.—Spreading the toils.—No shooting.—The first rush.—Rounded up.—"Chock full of game."—Natives show fight.—Assault repulsed.—"Plenty of dollars in there."—Infernal massacre.—The skipper's discretion.—No first shot.—Shooting each other.—House in flames.—Roasting natives alive.—Killing the wounded.—Hatching mutiny.—Time to quit.—Boats cut adrift.—Shots to leeward.—Bruce's address to the ship.—Great red, bloody path.—Mad again.—Sharks and flying fish.—Testing the devil.—Land at last.

It was as dark—as we say in Samoa—as the inside of a Solomon islander, on whose skin a lump of coal will make a white mark; but, led by the skipper, whose one eye could see, like a cat's, just as well as in daylight, we worked our way along in silence.

When we got quite close, we spread out all along the road, behind the houses, right round them, and then laid down until the word came to rush in and do the work.

There was no movement at all in the place, the poor devils were in their houses fast asleep;

but, by the sparkle of the fires, which crackled every now and then, as a puff of the night breeze blew the sticks into a little blaze, we could see some of them asleep round them.

By-and-by the boss came along, crawling on his belly, like a great ugly lizard, and gave us word to catch the men round the fire first, and when they sung out, and made a row, to rush the houses, and stop the rest from getting away, but to do no shooting.

Then we crept, crept, crept quietly and slowly, like serpents, right between the houses, and no one stirred, we were so sly.

As we passed the doors, we left one or two men at each, to keep them fast when the row began.

Nearer and nearer we crept, till we came up to those chaps sleeping round the fire, when we got up, rushed upon them, and before they knew what was up they were lashed quite safe.

Of course they sung out like anything to their friends in the houses, who tried to get out and escape to the bush, but the men we left at the doors kept them in till we came up to help.

"Keep them in! Keep every mother's son of the black devils in!" shouted the skipper,

"They were suspecting nothing."

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running about quite wild, with a pistol in each hand.

"Don't let them out; we'll have the lot this journey! No d—mn canoes here; but no shooting! I'll kill the man who fires a shot; by the Holy, I will!" And, my word! he meant it, too, as he danced about, looking so savage and devilish, with that big red eye of his rolling round and round like to tumbling out, and shining like a fiery furnace.

I was not afraid of him then, but I hadn't forgotten how he looked at me in the boat, and I watched him close, so as not to give him the chance of first shot.

We next searched through house after house, which were all in a line down the beach, beginning with the end ones, tying up all the blackbirds we found, until we came to two big places right in the middle of the village.

These, the chaps at the door told us, were "chock full of game."

"Come along with me," sung out the skipper. "Ten of you put down your guns, and come along with me; but all bring lashings."

Then he and a few others rushed into the house, but very soon came out again, the boss

with the blood running all over his ugly face, from a cut he had got in the dark; over him tumbled a man with a spear right through him, the point sticking a long way out from his back; and two others never came back at all, for although the natives hadn't much time to talk, they somehow or other persuaded them to stop.

All the rest of the men at this got into a awful rage, but the skipper kept very cool, and looked more devilish than ever I saw him before.

As he tied up his wounded head in a big handkerchief, he sang out, "Never mind, boys! We'll have them all presently. No shooting. Catch 'em alive. Plenty of dollars in there, and a dead nigger isn't worth a curse."

All his talk was of no use, for the chaps were so excited they began shooting into the house all round.

The shrieks and yells of the poor devils inside were dreadful to hear, and sounded right above the row of the firing and the yelling of the men, while the skipper ran about everywhere, shouting out to stop the shooting, but the men were so mad they would not leave off.

The boss at last threatened them, but,

pointing their guns at him, they soon made him leave them to themselves.

All this time I didn't join in any of the row, because I had to keep an eye on the skipper, who, I knew, wanted to kill me in the scrimmage, and I went to one side and sat down on a log.

By-and-by he saw me, and ran over. I saw him coming, and got ready.

At first he was in too big a rage to see that I had got the "bead" on him, as rushing up he said,—

"D—mn you! All this is your fault. You talked those men over and made them mutinous. I'll have it out of you, you cursed black nigger!" And then he began to draw his weapon, but didn't pull it right out, as he found that mine was pointed straight at himself.

He was always very discreet in his rows, and didn't much like fighting if he couldn't get first shot; so, seeing that his game was up for the time, he quietly took a seat on the log alongside of me.

The row going on all the time was awful, bullets were flying round just anyhow, as through and through the grass walls of the

house they went, wounding our own people, who, thinking that the natives were doing it, cursed, and swore, and fired all the harder.

Presently a fellow sung out,—"Let's have a light, to see the brutes better;" and then some one put a match to the house.

In a minute the thick grass roof burst into flames with a terrific roar, sending their long red and yellow tongues high aloft amongst the cocoanut trees, shrivelling up their big branches like tinder, and scorching with their fiery breath the cool green breadfruit leaves into cinders.

Presently the big roof fell in with a loud crash, throwing up millions and millions of bright sparks and clouds of smoke; it seemed to me just like that picture of hell they have there up at Vaeiá in the Catholic college, and our chaps dancing and yelling all round, like the devils in it stirring up the fire.

Once I really thought I saw the "old gentleman" in the middle of the flames, but it was only some of the natives, roasting alive, trying to get out; but not one escaped.

The next house, with more people in it, soon caught fire, when the poor beggars inside tried to rush out, but as they came jumping

through the roaring flames they were shot by our chaps, or cut down with their cutlasses.

The men forgot all about dollars: they were only mad to kill and murder everything that came near them.

With fierce yells and laughs, they hove back into the fire all the natives they caught trying to get away through them, until at last all were dead and quiet.

How the skipper did swear and curse as he sat still alongside of me! but he didn't like to go amongst the men while they were wild.

In the end, the whole place was burnt, and nothing was left of the pretty little town but smoking ashes and two heaps of roasted human bodies, killed just for devilment, amongst which were two of our own fellows.

The man with the spear through him was sure to die, so, to save trouble, one of the others blew his brains out, and he was left along with the rest.

When all was over, we took the few birds we had caught down to the boats, the men returned one by one, and off we went to the ship.

When we got on board, it was still daylight, so we weighed anchor, and, with all easy sail set, went off before the wind.

The skipper never spoke a word to any one, and didn't even look at me; but all the same I stood ready for him, and I made up my mind that I wouldn't go to my bunk that night with him near.

After sulkily walking round to see all right, he went straight to his cabin with the two mates, and stopped there drinking and talking with the door shut.

I knew what they were talking about,—it was about me and the men.

They thought I wanted to make the men mutiny; and they saw what I saw,—and that was, the men didn't give up their guns on coming on board, but carried them with them to the fo'c's'le.

I didn't like the look of that myself, for I saw they meant to take the ship, or to get up to some other devilment; and between the two sides I was bound to come to grief.

As it got dark, the wind died off altogether, and left the ship with sails flapping, rolling, and twisting on the tops of the smooth black

swells, out of sight of land, drifting nobody cared where.

There had been plenty of rum knocking about all the day, and from all being so quiet, I thought the men were asleep.

The mate gave them all the stuff they asked for, to get them drunk, and then get the guns; but I don't think they drank so much as the mate thought they did, for to me they seemed working cunning, and at first talked a lot more than usual; and when I saw them go into the fo'c's'le and shut the door, I was certain sure there would be a fight that night, and determined to leave the ship if I got the chance.

The boats had not been hoisted in, but were towing alongside. There was my chance! Perhaps I might strike off an island, or get picked up by some ship, and so live; but if I stopped I was sure to be killed, as I was hated by all alike.

I kept quiet all alone on deck until it was quite dark, then I crawled forward to the fo'c's'le door, and heard a great buzz of talking.

They weren't either drunk or asleep, but were getting ready for taking the ship!

I then went softly aft, and leaning right over the side, I saw the bright light shining out from the skipper's cabin, and heard loud talking going on.

They spoke about getting the guns from the chaps forrard, and about me.

I thought then it was quite time to be off, so I slipped down the rope into the smallest boat.

The other two were tied up with her, but no fear that I left them.

I cut them loose at the same time, and then we all three drifted away together slowly, till, bit by bit, like a great black ghost, with his long arms stretched out groaning and bowing to me, that cursed hooker melted right out of my sight in the darkness, and I saw no more of her; but before we parted company for good, I heard from her, and what I did hear made me glad.

For about an hour I sat as still as a mouse, afraid to make a noise, and then a little wind sprang up, when I set sail, and let the boat go on her easiest course anywhere, to get out of sight from the ship before morning; but before I did so I knocked the bottoms out of the two other boats.

I sailed along very nice and quiet in the dark, thick night, with the breeze rising every minute, till at last we were going quite lively over the greasy, bumpy water, looking blacker than the night itself.

By-and-by, a long way down to leeward, I heard the sound of musket shots, and saw the bright flashes, like shooting stars, about four or five miles off.

I knew there would be a fight that night. I knew it main well. I suppose my friend Old Nick told me so; but I didn't care; there they were fighting, and I was safe out of it!

Golly! How I shouted and laughed all alone in the boat as I saw the spitting flashes and heard the bangs!

"Fight! fight away! fight!" I sung out to them. "Fight! D—mn you! Fight till you are all killed as dead as those natives on shore." And I yelled to them just as if they could hear me.

"You both want John King Bruce, don't you? You'll never get him, that's all! 'Where is the first mate?' you say. You want his blood, but you don't get it this journey; curse you all! And where's your boats, eh? 'Gone

with that d——d Bruce!' you say. Yes, you scoundrels! they have; two are gone to the bottom, he is very comfortable in the other, and you have got no more on board."

Then I laughed again so loud as I thought of the rage they would all get into when they found no Bruce and no boats; and again I shouted and abused them all I knew, till I got so mad that I tumbled half out of the boat.

That made me think of where I was, and as soon as I got cool, I sat down and rowed, to get the boat as far away from the ship as possible before sun up.

By-and-by the day began to break, the stars went out, the sky kept on changing colour, brighter, brighter, brighter, till at last up jumped the big sun from the water, and threw a great red path, red as blood, on its bosom, from, as it looked, the edge of the world right into the stern of the boat.

The sight of that colour made me feel very queer again, so I turned away my gaze, and looked the other way, searching for anything in sight, but I saw nothing.

Something soon made me take another look round, and there was that awful path on the

" Right in the middle of the big red sun, I saw plainly the three top-masts of a ship below the sky-line."

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blue water, redder than ever; it came right up to the stern of the boat, and no farther.

I got so mad staring, that I thought I should like to take a walk on it, and nearly did, but as I lifted up my eyes, before starting, to look at the other end, there, by the devil! right in the middle of the big red sun, I saw plainly the three topmasts of a ship below the sky-line, just on the beginning of that bloody road that was driving me crazy.

I knew that it was the cursed ship I had just run away from, and I heard the devil telling me that there had been awful work during the night, and to get still farther away I sat down, put out the oars, and pulled my hardest.

As I rowed and rowed in my scare, the sun got higher and higher, the blood-red path sunk slowly through the bright blue waves, and I felt easier, but could not stop pulling, so afraid was I that they might see me, and drag me off to their floating hell.

The sun got hotter and hotter; I felt it boiling in my brains, but still I kept up the work, till at last I couldn't go on any longer, and fell down quite silly to the bottom of the boat.

When I came to, the sun was going down fast, and presently all was dark again.

My head now felt all right, but I was dreadfully hungry and thirsty, and had nothing to satisfy me.

All that night I thought of what I should do if I didn't reach land or meet a ship. I supposed I should die mad.

Then again, I thought of what the devil said, that he would tell me when he wanted me; and he had said nothing yet, so I thought I might pull through.

The breeze still kept up nicely, sending the boat along quite fast, but where I was going I hadn't the smallest idea, except that it was to the west.

When the light came, I looked all round for ships, and badly I wanted to see one, yet, at the same time, I didn't, for I was afraid of my old ship getting me again.

There was nothing in sight, not even a bird,—I was alone in the middle of a big ring of sky and water.

After a good look round, I felt so hungry, thirsty, and miserable that I sat down, shut my eyes, and leaning my head on the side of the boat, began thinking,—

"What is the use of living any more? When

the sun gets up, I shall suffer all the tortures of the damned, worse than yesterday. I think I'll finish up and jump over.

"There is no ship, no land, nothing to eat, nothing to drink, no wind, and I'm too weak to row, even if I had the oars, which dropped overboard the last time I fell asleep. No, it's no use going on any longer. If the devil won't come to me, I'll go to him."

I was just going to rise and jump over, when something hit me on the head, and the boat rattled all over, just as if a shower of stones had been thrown into her.

I didn't like to look at first, because I thought the devil had heard me, and really come. I didn't move my head one bit, but at last my eyes opened quite slowly, and the first things I saw were two enormous sharks, close to my face, looking at and watching me with their cruel grey eyes.

I jumped back in a moment, and then I saw what had made all the clatter, and had hit my head—a lot of flying fish, that those sharks had driven out of the water into the boat.

They saved my life! I ate them until I could swallow no more; they were both meat

and drink; and in my silliness I thanked those sharks, as they swam round, one on each side of the boat, for their kindness over and over again.

They kept so close that I could almost have touched them, but I didn't try, for I knew they would jump at my arm, and drag me out of the boat.

As I spoke to them, they appeared to answer with a cunning wink: "All right, darkie! You'll go clean mad soon, and then we shall have you. We can wait a long time."

Then I said to them: "Not for the next few days, at least, gentlemen. I've got plenty of the fish you so kindly sent me left;" and I hung one over, just to aggravate them.

One shark looked so wicked that I began to think, "Perhaps you are the devil himself, and that's why you sent me those flying fish. I'll just see. If you are 'Old Nick,' my knife won't cut you; but if you are only a shark, I think I'll kill you, and then I shall have plenty to eat."

To try the question, I lashed my knife on to the shaft of the boathook, and then threw a bit of an old bag over the bows.

The shark saw it fall, and very, very slowly went up the side of the boat, to see if it was good to eat, and as he passed I drove the knife right through him.

The stroke must have broken his back, for he only gave one big splash with his tail, so close to the boat that the water he drove on board nearly knocked me over the other side, and then he lay quite dead, his great big ugly jaws wide open, with his teeth shining in three horrid rows in the sunlight.

I put a line round him, got him quite alongside, soon cut the liver out of him, and put it away on board.

"No more thirst for two days, at least, with all that juicy stuff," I said to myself. And then I thought of getting some meat off him, and was just going to the side, when a big tug came, almost capsized the boat, and nearly threw me overboard.

I got up and saw what it was.

A lot of other sharks had come when they smelt the blood, grabbed my one, and if the rope I tied him with hadn't broken, certain sure they would have been tearing me up as they were their relation.

How those devils did fight, and lash the red water into froth! it made me think again of that bad sailor on board the ship who was killed for murdering the mate.

But the thoughts of him didn't bother me much, for I felt quite safe and strong now, and would have set to work rowing, only I had no oars, so I sat down and whistled for a wind.

By-and-by the breeze came up strong, and it began to rain; but I didn't want it now, as I had lots of shark's liver to chew when I was thirsty; besides that, I had nothing to catch the water in.

It blew hard all that night, and the first thing in the morning, about five miles off, I saw a long line of white water, and behind that a lot of little black dots, which I knew were trees, standing out above the land.

"Thank God," I said—I forgot all about my friend the devil, since I found he didn't send me the flying fish—"thank God, there's land at last!" And I sung and prayed, and did I don't know what; I was that joyful.

I soon got quite near to the reef, over which the big seas were breaking with terrific noise, and I saw it was one of those lagoon places,

where the islands are in the middle of a big reef, which goes all round them like a ring.

About two miles off, inside, I saw two or three little bits of dry land, with cocoanut trees sticking straight out of them, like so many green mops, and in the middle of the smooth lagoon, where the water was like a sheet of blue glass, everything looked nice and cool in the morning light.

I sailed along the outside of the reef, searching for a smooth place to get through the surf, and for a long time could find nothing but a white line of breakers, pounding themselves to atoms on the sharp coral rocks, and throwing the spray in big fountains high up into the air, as the swells smashed themselves against them with a loud, crashing noise.

About the middle of the day, I found a quiet spot, put the boat through, and was soon floating in peace on the calm waters of the lagoon.

There were three small islands in it, covered with cocoanut trees, looking so lovely with the sparkling white coral sand all round them.

On the biggest island I saw what I then thought was the best sight in the whole world :

a busy little stream of water, running out of the cool green bushes, and trickling, like a silver thread, through the coral rocks over the beach to the sea.

There I landed; and, my word! didn't I just drink a lot of that water! Better than all the rum in the world; better than all the sharks' liver in the Pacific; better than everything I knew of. Then I bathed in it, and afterwards laid down, and fell asleep.

CHAPTER VI.

Exploration.—Signs of white men.—Turtle, fish, and cocoa-nuts.—Surprised by natives.—A *bêche-de-mer* fisher.—Four months' work.—Uncanny joking.—A sinful compact.—Saving the dollars.—Moonlight dance.—One day more and go home.—That good white man.—"What kind of song this evening?"—"Sold the cargo?" "No; sold the niggers."—A cheating old hand.—Piratical thoughts.—Arrive at Jaluit.—Signs of Sunday.—Schooner sold.—"Good-bye, boss."—A reappearance.—Good advice.—Bruce reformed.—Steal the ship.—Off for Fiji.

THE next morning I set to work to look round and see what the new place was like, and I soon found that I was not the first white man who had been there, for on the other side of the island I came across some large iron kettles and small open huts, and in amongst the trees, in the shade, close alongside a big pool of fresh water, from which the pretty little stream on the other side ran, was a rough-built wooden house, with a big padlock on the door.

"Wonder what's in there?" I said to myself; and before long I knew, for I broke the lock and went in.

There I found all sorts of things belonging to white men—knives, fish lines, hooks, clothes, and what was better than all, a cask or two of good biscuit, and a keg of salt horse.

Whoever the owners were, I could see that they had not long left the place, as everything looked so fresh. I determined to take up my quarters here; so I went to the place where I first landed, to bring round the boat, and that same night I slept like a Christian, in a house, with a good bellyful, and quite comfortable.

I stopped on those three islands, I think, for about four months, with plenty to eat and drink, and nothing to do, and no great hope of getting away.

The fish were no trouble to catch, and in plenty; the turtle came up to the very door, asking to be cooked and eaten; and there were heaps of cocoanuts, whenever I wanted them; but with all this I got very tired, and wished to get away somewhere else.

I then began to get the boat ready for a cruise anywhere, and was hard at work at her

one morning, when, all of a sudden, I was grabbed by the throat from behind, my hands and feet tied, and thrown down in the middle of a crowd of naked savages, grinning and dancing all round me.

Presently a white man came along, almost as naked as the natives, carrying a gun on his shoulder, and a big knife in his belt, and looking at me, said: "Who the h—l are you? Where in thunder do you come from? Don't you know this is my island, and that I don't allow no one here?"

He looked so fierce I was quite frightened, and told him that I was a white man like himself.

"The devil you are!" said he; "I never saw a white man your colour before."

I then explained my case to him, and he cut me loose; then he told me that the island was his property, and that he came there twice a year with a party of natives, fishing and drying *bêche-de-mer*, which he took back to the nearest port, and sold; and, anchored in the deep water about half a mile from shore, he pointed me out his schooner—a pretty little craft of about thirty tons.

Well, I stopped with that man for the next four months, and worked with him collecting, cooking, drying, packing, and putting on board ship this sort of stuff, for which the natives dived all over the place.

One day, when the little craft was very nearly full up, the chap came to me, and said he: "I'm going away soon, Bruce, and I suppose you don't want to be left behind?"

"No, that I don't," I answered; "I've had plenty of this place;" and I laughed, for I thought he was joking, but his face looked so serious and determined that I stopped that, and asked him what he meant.

He continued: "I mean that if you don't do what I want I shall leave you to take care of the reef, and the trees, and the turtle and the fish outside; but you don't have no biscuit; and perhaps, too, I shall cut down all the cocoanuts before I leave. They are all mine, you know, and I can do what I like with them."

"Lord have mercy!" I cried; "don't leave me here alone! I'll do anything you like, only take me with you. If I am left, it won't be long before the land-crabs are picking my bones."

"You're right there, my boy! They made short work of the chap who was here before you. I was obliged to shoot him, because he refused to do what I wanted."

"By golly, boss! I'll do everything you want," said I. "Only just show me the man you want killed, and I'll do it at once; only don't leave me here, I'm so precious full up with the place."

"All right," he concluded, with a sort of cunning look; "I'm a very quiet man, but I must not be worried on my own ground. This place is worn out, all the fish are gone, and I don't want to come back here any more.

"It's those confounded niggers that's so very expensive; and, don't you see, if I take them back to their homes, I shall have to pay the six months' wages that I told them I would give when the fishing was over.

"The fishing is not worth a snap or the bother of dividing this season, so we'll take the schooner back ourselves, save the dollars, and you shall have a share.

"I think to-morrow night will do for a start; but, first of all, just you knock a hole in your boat, so that the boys can't follow."

"All right," said I; "I'm with you;" so off I went, and burst a plank right out of the boat, so big that no native could mend it, and then I returned to tell him all was ready in that quarter.

He then said to me: "The boys have worked very well lately, haven't they?" "Yes, boss," said I. "Then I think we'll give them a treat; so come along. We'll go and see them; they shall have some grog, and give us a dance in the moonlight."

When we got to the camp, we found that the boys had just finished their grub, and were lying round the fires, on their mats, yarning about all sorts of wonderful things, as they always do before turning in.

They were always very cheerful and happy after their long day's work diving after the fish, but just then they were all the more joyful because they thought that in a day or two they would be going home to their people, on their own island, with plenty of all the things they liked best, such as calico, knives, beads, lines, hooks, and such articles like those.

When they saw us coming, the women got up, and brought along a nice clean mat, upon which we squatted in the middle of them.

My friend then told them that the ship was nearly full up, and that in two more days we should all go home,—only one more day's fishing, and the next day off,—but in the meantime he and I were to get the schooner ready for sea.

He told them that because if they saw us both together pulling the sails and ropes about they would suspect something, for they all knowed well what white men had done before, and it was not the first time that some of the crowd had been out.

The boss said all sorts of pleasant and good things to them, produced the grog, and the boys and women were soon dancing, with shouts and songs, on the smooth white coral sand, by the light of the broad bright moon, till they all were exhausted, and had to lie down.

In the morning, as soon as the sun began to look over the tops of the cocoanuts, away went the crowd to the far-off reef, singing as they skylarked and splashed through the shallow water like children, to perform their last day's work.

Before they went, to keep up the "blind,"

the boss talked a lot to them, and then we went on board the schooner.

You know, natives make up their songs about anything, just as they want them, and the one they were singing, as they went off, was all about the schooner, and the two good white men who were going to get her ready to take them home to their friends.

The boss smiled, as he quietly said to me, "I wonder what kind of song they will sing this evening, if we have any wind? Would you like to stop and listen, Bruce?"

I didn't like that sort of joking, and I told him so.

As soon as we got on board, we set to overhauling the ropes and sails, and by mid-day everything was right but the wind.

By-and-by, when the boys, a long way off on the outside reef, looked like little black spots against the clear blue sky, a smart breeze sprung up, we pulled up the anchor, passed through the passage, and once more I felt the heave and the rush of the big sea swells beneath my feet, and I felt so glad.

Well, I don't know exactly how long we were at sea, for I kept no account of the days,

but I do know that we had very easy work in the fine weather that we carried with us all the way to Jaluit.

About ten days out, early one morning, with very little wind, only enough to keep the ship going, we saw a smart-looking brig coming up.

When she got close, she hove to, and the boss, taking the dingy, went on board her, to see what she wanted, leaving me to take care of the schooner.

In about an hour he came back, when the brig filled her sails, and went off on her course.

He brought with him a bag full of money, which he shook up and laughed when he saw me stare.

"What, have you been trading?" I said; "been selling the cargo?"

"No fear, Bruce," said he, smiling all over his face. "Not the cargo, old man; but those chaps we left behind on the island. That brig is a labour ship, looking up recruits for Fiji, and the skipper is not particular how he gets them.

"I told him, as an old friend, that I knew where there were some thirty good men, who would very much like a passage to their own

island; some white man having left them there by mistake!"

"'What a big shame!' he said. 'I would give a couple of hundred dollars to know where those poor devils are, and take them home out of charity. I don't like those doings at all. That's the way we all get a bad name in the Pacific.'

"He then fetched this bag, and I told him where to go; but somehow or other I don't think they will get home quick in that brig, as I am afraid the skipper will have to call at Fiji before he gets to their island."

He then began to open the bag, looked in, and of all the awfulest cursing I ever experienced that man's was the worst.

Perhaps it was because I had never heard him swear much before, but after that lot I could see how talented he was in that direction.

"What's the matter?" said I.

"'What's the matter'! you d—mn fool!" he roared; "just look here; this is the matter. That cursed skipper has cheated me;" and with that he upset on the deck a whole heap of round bits of iron, which he had taken for dollars.

I suppose, when he took them, they felt round in the bag, clinked when he shook it, and were about the right weight for two hundred dollars, so he never looked at them on board the brig, and had given his dear friend thirty men for nothing!

I laughed like mad to think that one "old hand" had taken another "old hand" in so easy.

He looked very savage for a little, but soon laughed just as much as I did, and kicked the things overboard.

"The d——d scoundrel! I'll meet him sure again some other time, and get square; but, after all, it's the better, as I shall never see those fellows any more now, and it might be awkward for me if I did."

We soon forgot all about the brig, and sailed on quietly without any further trouble.

When the boss slept, I kept watch; when I was below, he kept awake; and at times we were both awake together, and amused ourselves swapping yarns about all sorts of things.

Altogether I liked the man, for he was the only one, bar that Liverpool sky pilot, who hadn't treated me like a dog.

All the same, plenty of times when I saw

him fast asleep the devil would whisper in my ear, "Suppose you knock him on the head, and throw him over; nobody will know, and you will have all the cargo."

However, I wouldn't listen to that advice, refused to be tempted, and from that blessed time I think I began to get good.

It was quite two months before we got to Jaluit, and anchored right abreast of the settlement, in the middle of four or five trading vessels.

On shore, scattered all up and down the beach, were plenty of wooden houses, the stores of the merchant traders, and the people were about as big a mixture as there was at Callao.

There were white men, Dutchies, Frenchies, Jackies, and all sorts of other niggers, and a precious rowdy gang they were.

I don't think there was one of the whole lot sober when I first saw them; and what they called the wine of the country—square gin—was going all day and all night; but I didn't join, for the stuff drove me mad.

This is the place where they say that they always know when Sunday comes round, from the people being worse drunk than in the rest

of the week, and I think it is true; but I never saw them sober any day.

The boss soon sold the cargo to one of the ships, and together we put it on board.

This time, I imagine, he did not take his money in a bag upon trust, but looked at it first, for when the job was finished he said to me: "Bruce, it is all over now; I've sold the cargo and the ship; so good-bye, and good luck to you, and here's thirty dollars for you. If that skipper of the brig hadn't cheated me, there would have been more, but I can't help it now."

Then off he went to one of the ships just leaving, and I thought I would see no more of him.

In about a month, however, I *heard* something, when a man arrived, making very anxious inquiries for him.

It appeared that this chap was the real owner of the schooner the boss sold; but he did no good, for neither he nor the ship could be found; so he had to go back with nothing.

I stopped a long time in that place, loafing round and doing odd jobs for my tucker; but all the time I kept myself respectable, and

didn't go on like the other fellows for fear I should go mad again.

When my thirty dollars were all gone, I did work in the stores, collected oil from the natives, loaded up ships, and got them water, but no one would pay me in dollars.

They knew if they did I should get money and go off in some ship, and that they didn't want, but liked to keep me on the beach to work for almost nothing.

All I got was plenty of grub and good places to sleep in, but no cash; and I grew precious tired of that sort of thing.

One day I was sitting on the beach, thinking hard of how I should get away, and looking at the little schooner that brought me there, just come in from the other side of the island, with a cargo of oil for the stores, when some one punched me in the back.

I looked round sharp, and, bless me! there was my old boss, who I thought I should see no more.

"Hallo, Bruce!" he began; "how goes it? Looking at my ship? We had a very nice little trip in her, didn't we, old man?"

"Yes, boss," I said; "and I am so precious

tired of this hole that I wish I could take another in her. But where have you come from?"

"Never you mind where I've come from," he answered; "it's no matter of yours. What I want to know from you is whether you will come along with me for another cruise in my schooner."

He looked, as he said this, so wicked and knowing that I waited a little before I said: "But that craft isn't yours, and a man who came here just after you left said it never was."

"I know all about that mistake. It's all right; that chap is an awful fool, and doesn't savee what he is talking about. But, Bruce, look here. You shouldn't ever raise unpleasant subjects in these parts, they are much too free for that; it's a very dangerous practice, I can tell you; and my mild temper has very much changed since I found out the fellow who bought the schooner had cheated me. I can't stand argument so quietly as I used to. That blackguard didn't give me half enough, but I've not seen him yet on the matter."

"But," said I, "does that vessel belong to you again?"

"No, Bruce, no," he said very gently, with a cunning grin all over his face; "but it's going to belong to me to-night, and you are going to help me sail her to Fiji before morning.

"I know she's all right for the trip, as I saw her fill up, on the other side of the island, before she came round here.

"She's full of oil, too, and that will pay our expenses. I don't like being cheated, and must get square somehow; there's no law courts here, so we have to take our own parts. You understand?"

"Oh, yes," said I; "you mean to steal that ship again."

My golly! he looked so very ferocious at me that I was sorry I had spoken, but it only lasted a minute, when he said again: "I think I told you, John King Bruce, that in these islands it is not good for the health to make personal and unfeeling remarks.

"I told you that practice was very risky, and I tell you once more that it is likely to lead to very serious difference of opinion. Now, don't you do it again. That's my honest advice. But now let us talk proper business.

"I mean to have that ship to-night, and you have got to help me get her.

"Now, listen attentively. That craft belongs to me. The chap who bought her only gave me half what she was worth, and he has had the use of her for more than two months.

"Now, I shall charge him the dollars he gave me for that hire; so, don't you see, that if I take her back I don't steal her."

I began to shake my head, when he quickly continued,—

"Now, Bruce, don't you interrupt me. You had better shut up. I saw you were going to say something unpleasant.

"And about the cargo? We've got no time to discharge that, so it must stop for the present, but we will make all arrangements for it when we get to Fiji; then, if our expenses are not too heavy, the money it fetches shall be sent back. Do you see?"

I, of course, thought I saw, and said: "All right, boss, I'll go along with you; and I'm very glad it is not stealing, for I have turned good now."

"I'm very, very glad to hear it, Bruce, for I

don't want no rowdy chaps in my ship; they annoy me, and then I get bad and fighty.

"You can't savee the awful weight of responsibility that rests on the shoulders of a ship's captain, if he does his duty, whether he is the owner or not; of course you don't; but it's very heavy, all the same. Perhaps you'll feel it some day, Bruce, when you get a ship of your own; and who knows, this trip, that we shan't pick up one for you? then you'll know what it is to be a skipper.

"You can't think how joyful I am that you have turned good, because you were main bad once—got drunk, killed men, and all that sort of thing. You know, at times I didn't feel quite safe last trip, after what you told me that night you took too much gin.

"You were so wild, and said such awful things, that once or twice I almost thought it best to shoot you; and, do you know, Bruce, I am almost certain sure that, now and then, you thought the same thing about me, because once I woke up and saw you staring at me very queer.

"I wasn't always asleep when you looked me over like that, though you thought so.

"Yes, my Christian friend, you made me very anxious at those times, but more especially about the safety of the ship and cargo,—nothing else, I assure you,—but now it will be all right, as you are good.

"You can't think what a relief it is to my mind.

"I shall sleep well this trip, because I shall know I have got good John King Bruce looking out on deck. I don't like that sleeping with one eye open all the time; it makes me tired, and then I get irritable.

"Oh, yes; it *is* a great relief that you are good now; but I always sleep very lightly, the least thing wakes me up; and, you know, old man, I've been so long used to wear a pistol, to protect myself from bad men, that I can't turn in without one.

"See! here it is. You got one? No? Well, maybe that is all the better for you: there's lots of bad accidents with those things; they are always going off when you don't want them to."

He then stopped his talk, and walked a little way down the beach with his arms folded, thinking hard.

Presently he turned round, came back, poking his face close to mine, and looking very spiteful, said,—

"Now, Bruce, I'm going off to get my things. You must meet me here just about dark; and mind you don't let on to any one that you have seen me, and spoil this trip.

"I don't want any one to see me off; parting with old friends is painful, and I don't like it.

"Now understand, when I come back I don't want to see any one but you; and, by the Holy! if I do find any bad men about, it will be the worse for you, my dear friend, for I'll shoot you first."

He looked so wicked when he said this that he awfully scared me, so I said: "Right you are; I don't think I'll go up amongst those chaps in town any more, but stop just here till you come back;" and, giving me one more look, he went off through the trees, without another word.

As I sat there, in the very same place, I thought carefully over all that the boss had told me, and the more I thought the less I liked it.

He said that he was glad I'd turned good.

and in the very same breath he talked about his confounded pistol!

Then, how the deuce did he savee what I thought on board the schooner coming here?

He must be the devil himself to know that, for I didn't tell him anything that I can remember.

It was all lies about my having too much drink; he never gave me half enough!

I really thought he must have slept with one eye open, and caught me looking at him, that time I thought about taking the ship.

I made up my mind on the spot to be very careful this next trip, and determined he shouldn't catch me looking ugly again.

Well, there I sat, talking to myself, and thinking, till the sun began to get very low, all the time watching the big and little sea-birds belonging to the island coming home to their resting-places, in ones, and twos, and threes, after their day's work was done, and whispering to themselves, or to one another, just the same as I was doing.

At last all had come home except one big fellow, and he kept sailing round and round above me, squawking loudly all the time.

I thought: "What's that you say up there? Do you tell me to go home and rest? It's no use to tell me that. John King Bruce has got no home, my beautiful white friend, sitting on the wind up there. He is just going to look for a home, and would very much like to find rest.

"Tell me, my beauty, where shall he go for it?

"He don't know; the only rest he thinks he will get will be when he is dead, and the sharks have got him; or when the land-crabs are fighting over his carcass in some place like this. Then he may have rest, but not before."

All the time I thought like this the bird never left, but sailed round and round in rings, squawking, as though he was answering me; then, at last, he flew away, right over the trees, and I saw him no more.

By-and-by the sea breeze stopped, and the night wind from off the land began to talk to me in whispers, as it rustled through the thick hanging leaves of the cocoanut trees, high overhead, and passing on, gently broke the smooth blue water of the lagoon into tiny, tiny little waves; and I sat still, watching all this, scarcely

thinking of anything—it was so nice, cool, and quiet.

Then the sun, all fiery red, blazing like anything, touched the edge of the bright blue water, and for a minute or two everything turned to his own blood-red colour,—the sky, the water, the reef, the trees, everything was all the same,—until at last, with a sudden dive, he was gone for the day.

As the light went the waters all turned black; the sky kept on changing colour, until it was almost as dark as the sea, and the stars, coming out one by one, looked, shining down upon me, just as if they wanted to say: "Good-evening, Bruce! we begin our work together."

It got darker and darker, and soon so dark that I lost sight of, first the reef, then the ship, and at last the very rocks in front of me, and still I sat waiting for the boss.

Presently I heard the sound of a boat, rowing from the direction I knew the schooner was, and, going down to the edge of the water, saw one coming towards shore.

"Who the devil is that?" I thought; "it's all over with the game for this night, and just won't the old man be in a rage!

"I don't like this at all; he will think I've let on about the steal, and go for me.

"He said that if he found any bad men with me when he came back he would shoot me first, so I'm off."

I was just about to run away, when the man in the boat sung out; and, by Jove! it was the boss himself.

"Come along, Bruce; look sharp! And then looking hard at me, he said: "What the devil is the matter with you?"

I answered in astonishment: "But how did you get on board that schooner?"

He looked angry, and answered sharp: "Mind your own business! You seem to have forgotten what I told you about asking impudent questions. Jump in at once, or I shall get annoyed."

I got in, took the oars, and rowed off to the schooner, when we tripped anchor, loosed sails, and the fine, strong land breeze soon carried us in safety through the reef to the open sea.

CHAPTER VII.

Working the schooner.—Skipper excited.—A playful knock.—Whales all round.—Nearly swamped.—Old whaler's agony.—Lesson in fishing.—Ten thousand pounds wasted.—Illuminated sea.—Sprays and fountains of fire.—"Why didn't I steal a bigger ship?"—Black clouds ahead.—"That's land, Bruce."—The creeping dawn.—Dancing natives.—A bad beach-comber.—Getting up a fight.—Discreet retreat.—Confidential moments.—Signs of a storm.—The boss and the water.—Moaning of the coming tempest.

Well, sir; it's no use to bother you with how we sailed along, day after day, just in the same old way.

The day went, and the night came; the sun would get up all pink and lovely, with every sort of nice promise, and would go down in frowns of fiery red and yellow; the stars would burst out to help us see, and sometimes the moon would shine brightly, and keep us company in our long watch.

We took it turn and turn about to steer the

ship, but all the time I couldn't help seeing that the boss kept a sharp eye on me.

Sometimes we would have a nice strong breeze, and travel on it beautifully; at other times—once for two days and a night—we had no wind at all, the sea was as smooth as glass, and the ship did nothing but turn round and round, like a lump of meat on a roasting-jack; and it was like roasting, too, for us, for the sun right above was beating down so hot that we could scarcely breathe.

Then we would grumble like fun, and the boss would find fault with everything, and I knew better than to answer back; but as soon as the wind came up, everything would get right again: he would then smile like an angel, and perhaps bring out the grog.

One day, during my watch below, I was roused up by an awful row on deck, and heard my chum cursing and swearing like anything, and stamping his feet on the deck, until I thought he had gone mad.

Above all this, I heard such a snorting, grunting row, as if all the pigs in the world were talking together, and blowing their noses, and now and then I could hear the tumble of water

rattling down, for all the world like washing down the decks on board that Yankee man-of-war with the fire engine.

Such a shindy as there was I never heard before: there was swearing, dancing, snorting, grunting, and water splashing about, all jumbled up together.

All this so puzzled me that I thought I would stop where I was; but I got so curious at last that I popped up my head through the hatchway; and the moment I did that, before I could look round, a big thump on the side nearly knocked the schooner out of the water, and sent the boss, who was shouting and dancing about like Old Nick, flat on his back, and at the same time, with the noise of a hurricane, a big fountain of water spouted right up into the air, and fell back with a thundering smash on the deck, nearly washing him overboard.

Then, quite suddenly, to my horror, there came out of the sea, close alongside, an enormous great fish tail, higher, much higher, than our mast, with fins on it bigger than the mainsail.

It stopped there aloft, almost over the ship, shaking and quivering in the air, and then slap

it came down, with such a bang that, with a row like the report of a cannon, the water flew over the little craft like a wave, and nearly swamped us.

I thought the last day was come, and dived down below again, but the boss, all wet through and swearing, sung out: "Come here, Bruce, you nigger! I'll teach you something! Come up! d—mn you! and look!" And I dursn't refuse, for I thought he was mad.

Crawling up, and holding on to the mast alongside of him, I asked him what was the row.

"Look there, you black scoundrel!" said he, jumping about as mad as he well could be in so small a craft; "there's ten thousand pounds and more swimming about, and I've only this cussed little hooker, with no tackle and nothing! Just like my luck, Bruce! Those are *whales;* and if I only had a proper ship, I'd make my fortune and yours before dark.

"Oh! ain't I just unfortunate! I'm an old whaler, and can't bear to see all this waste."

He then sat down, and, by the holy poker! began crying like a child.

I said nothing, for I was main frightened,

both of him and the rumpus going on in the water close alongside.

On both sides, over the bows, under the stern, all round, was hundreds and hundreds of those great black devils, sliding and slipping all over the place, and tearing up the big, green, smooth swells into froth.

They seemed to be enjoying themselves immensely, rolling over one another in great sport, and, as I thought, playing with the ship, which they took to be one of themselves.

There they were all round, throwing up their fountains high into the air with tremendous blowing roars.

Then, just as if they had told one another, at the same moment, up would go their tails, high out of the water, and down they would slip slowly out of sight, leaving the smooth sea as if there had been no disturbance at all.

I thought first time that they had gone for good; but no! in about a couple of minutes up would come their great, black, shiny backs, and then they would begin once more, surging, rolling, frothing, and throwing up their spouts of water just as they pleased.

They stopped with the ship, sporting like this,

all day long; and when it got dark, the water all round was alight with their splashings.

Their spoutings looked like great sprays of fire, and as they darted, in their games, through the still water, the lines of dull light they made in their course crossed and crossed again, over and under each other, till it seemed that the ship was entangled in a net of flames.

At last the blowing and snorting stopped, the splashing was heard no more, the fiery net sank out of sight in the black waste of waters, and all became very dark and quiet.

Next morning, before the sun was up, we saw the sky in the east crowded with lovely little sparks of pink fire, floating light, on silvery feathers of mist, and pointing right straight towards us, against the ugly grey of the first dawn.

These, we knew, were clouds, coming up from far away, which had caught the sun's light before he showed above the line of the dark waters.

We knew, by them, that we should have wind soon; and as the day grew, up it came, and sent us along nicely.

The boss was all right as soon as those blessed whales left, but all the same, he was very,

very sorry that he did not steal a bigger ship to hunt them in.

We had now been out so long that the water began to run short, and every day we very anxiously looked out for land, but none hove in sight.

We sailed on and on like this, day after day, seeing nothing but a shark or two, and shoals of flying fish, skimming like swallows over and round, and in the hollows of the big banks of water, as they rolled and heaved smoothly on their way to Lord knows where.

Many flying fish made big mistakes in the daytime, and flew on board of us, and at times whole shoals would jump right over us from side to side.

At night we got lots of them by hanging a light in front of the mainsail. This attracted them to jump at it, hit the sail, and fall on deck. And very good tucker they were, too,—much better than the salt horse we had.

One morning, as I was steering, I saw a sort of black cloud in the sky, far away on the port bow, but I took no particular notice of it, and went on without thinking, and soon after it passed our beam we began leaving it behind.

About this time the boss tumbled up to take his watch, and before handling the tiller he took a good look all round.

When he saw the thing I thought was a cloud, he stopped quite still, shaded his eyes with his hands, and looked very hard at it.

Presently he turned to me, and, pointing at it, said, "See that?" "Yes," said I; "I've seen it all this blessed morning." "Well," he returned, with a sneer, "you may be a very good man, but, all the same, you're a d——d fool! That's land, Bruce! Put her about, you cursed nigger! We will go and have a look in there for water, and if it is all right, we'll stop a spell, for I don't know where we are."

We turned the ship round at once, and, although we travelled fast, the land grew out of the water very, very slowly, till darkness overtook us, when we shortened sail, to wait till morning, drifting about anyhow.

When the day began to break, we looked out for land, and as we did we saw the sun first catch the green tree-tops on the tall mountain with his bright light, till they sparkled like emeralds.

Then a glorious belt of his golden rays,

thrown against the hillside, crept slowly, very slowly, as he rose, down, down, down, till it met the water rippling on the beach, when he burst suddenly up through the eastern ocean, and in a second everything was laughing and joyful that another day had began; and as the wind came up with him, we set sail, and stood in quite close.

It was an island, with no reef at all, but stood straight out of the water, with little coral points and black rocks poking out every here and there, making between them nice comfortable little bays, embracing pretty white shelly beaches, deeply set in their arms.

Behind, inland, rose a great hill, looking as if it was made of nothing but trees of all kinds and colours.

We went straight for the biggest bay, right ahead of us, and, as we came near, crowds of natives came down to the beach, screeching and dancing like fun.

The nearer we got the more they jumped and yelled, moving round and round a small mob of men carrying something stuck on poles, and all the time swinging their clubs and spears most furiously.

In the middle of all the rumpus was a man with a long beard, dressed all the same as the natives, and almost as dark.

At first we didn't take any particular notice of him, but when we saw that he carried a gun we knew he was a white man.

Putting a stop to the row for a minute, he came to the edge of the water, and made us signs to go away.

We showed that we were thirsty, and wanted water; but it was no use, for he again waved us away with his gun, and pointed to the things on poles, which we now saw were white men's heads.

Stopping the way of the boat, I looked round, and there I saw what I did on the first island I came to in the Pacific, for, standing out against the silvery green leaves of the bananas, were the same sort of black posts, which showed that some labour ship had been up to its devilish work; and I was glad to see, when I looked at those heads, that some of them had met with the punishment they deserved.

They no doubt had tried to play the old game, but these chaps had got a white man

living with them, and then blackbirding had gone wrong.

We tried for a long time to talk to the fellow, till at last he lost his temper, and let fly at us; at which the boss jumped below for his gun, and, golly! didn't he make the brown devils jump about!

The white man then shouted out something, and away they went to launch their canoes.

"Too many of the cusses!" said the boss quietly, as he fired another shot right into the thick of them. "Set sail at once, Bruce, and look sharp, or, by golly! they will have us for breakfast, and we shall look as pretty as those chaps on sticks. Here they come! Put her along, Bruce, or it's all over with us."

My word! I wasn't long getting the schooner before the wind; and off we shot, but only just in time—in another minute they would have been on top of us.

All the time the boss was firing away like blazes; but the savages didn't care a bit about that, for they had a white man of their own, who was firing too, and they would follow him to the devil.

By-and-by we got well away, when the boss turned round and said: "There, Bruce! You see the harm those cussed blackbirders do in the islands.

"They come down from all round, just anyhow. Steal the men. If they won't go quietly, they kill them; and when two peaceful, honest traders, like you and me, want a little water, we not only don't get it, but have to fight for our lives.

"That blackbirding ought to be put a stop to; it isn't Christian! But, I say, Bruce, weren't those fellows fools not to make friends till they got us on shore!"

This way the boss went on talking, just as though he was the mildest man in the whole world, which I knew he wasn't.

All that day he was very excited over his shooting and killing, and he drank no end of grog, "to save the water," he told me.

At the same time he didn't give me much. "He was afraid," he said, "that it would do a good man like me harm." And the more he drank the more he yarned, and told me all sorts of stories of what he had done in the islands before he met me; and if only a little part

of it was true, he wasn't one bit better than the skipper of that Callao-Peruvian.

At last he went to sleep down below, but, full as he was, he took gun, pistol, and grog with him, and locked himself in.

We had a fine, steady wind all night, so I let the schooner go just in the way she could take it easiest, until the boss could tell me the course to make.

The first thing in the morning up he came, and said at once: "What did I tell you last night, before I turned in?"

"Nothing at all," I answered, "but damning that beach-comber for kicking up that row on the island."

"Quite sure?"

"Yes, main sure; but I think the sun was just a little bit too strong last night."

"No, Bruce, not the sun, but the rum. I know all about that this morning; but it's all the fault of that mean white over there. What did he want to shoot at me for? Curse him! I'll be even with him before long. I always get square with my friends before I have done with them, and he is one of them now. Understand?

"But, I say, Bruce, didn't I talk about getting square with people last night? I sometimes do when I take a drop too much."

Now, that's just what he did talk most about, and pretty horribly too.

His "getting square" meant cutting throats; and if he didn't lie, it would have taken a big ship to carry all the people he'd "squared" up to date.

Anyhow, I didn't want him to square me that way, and just then he looked in the humour to do it, so I said: "How can I remember all you said last night? You gave me such a lot of grog that I was quite drunk long before you went below."

He laughed like fun at that, but suddenly stopped, and said quite seriously: "Perhaps it's all the better for you that you were tight, and don't remember all that I said,—if I said anything,—as I don't allow anybody to meddle with my private affairs without a fight; it ain't business. But how did the ship go in the night?"

I saw, like lightning, that he was trying to catch me, so I told another lie, and answered: "I don't know anything; I tumbled down and

went to sleep there, and only woke up a little before you came on deck."

"Well, old darkie, that's all right; but it's lucky for us the wind took us to sea, instead of back again to that island. If it had, our heads would have been walking about without their bodies by this time, in the middle of those other pretty chaps.

"But, Bruce, don't you think it's very wrong for a good man like you to drink too much, and risk the safety of the ship?

"I really think that, as skipper, I ought to take serious notice of it, and stop your wages, or something. But, there, you haven't got any to stop just yet, and won't have, if the cargo don't pay expenses; but we'll talk about that in Fiji.

"You see, old man, how great the responsibilities of the skipper are; and at present they weigh so heavy on me that I scarcely know what to do in your case.

"I like you very well, but, at the same time, I must do justice to the owners, whoever they are, as an honest skipper should; but I'll think the matter over in the course of the day."

I never quite knew whether that man was

joking or not, so I said nothing, and he left off his sneering, set the course, and took the helm.

On we went for two more days, going south the whole time, till our water got so very low that we had to allowance ourselves to one little panikin apiece a day.

At the end of the third day, the wind fell altogether again, and there we were left swinging about, twisting round and round, rolling and groaning, with the sail flapping fit to tear the mast out of her, on the tops and down in the hollows of the big black swells, rolling south like moving mountains, awful big, but quite smooth.

Although it was night, it was frightfully hot; the moon was shining bright, but quite low down, so that we only saw her when we climbed up to the top of the waves.

There, just for a moment, we caught a full sight of her, skipping and jumping to us in yellow rays over the dark lumps of water, heaving and throbbing as far as we could see.

Then down we would plunge into the depths below, between the two immense moving walls, almost in the dark; but above us, against the black sky, we could see the light shooting right

across the watery valley, from the top of one swell to the other, throwing a silvery bar between them.

Presently, as the wave passed beneath us, up we would shoot, twisting and twirling round as we climbed the height, and bursting through into the upper air, once more the deck was flooded with light; again and again we swung up and down like this, until I fell asleep, and remember no more till morning.

At daylight the boss woke me up, when I found the sea had gone down considerably, but still there was no wind.

The sun got up, but not in his usual peaceful mood; he was a bad, hazy, red, misty colour, and altogether looked very angry.

"There must have been a big blow somewhere north," said the boss, "to kick up all that rumpus of a swell last night, and I don't at all like the look of that beastly sunrise. We are going to have some bad weather, I'm afraid. Wish I had a barometer, then I could tell. What a careless chap that fellow was who hired this boat from me not to carry one! I wouldn't let such a chap as that sail any craft of mine. However, I don't like the look of things, so let

us make all snug for a blow. It will come, I'm sure; and when it does, it's precious hot in these parts, I can tell you."

We then set to work making everything fast, saw the ropes all clear for letting go, and nailed a large piece of tarpaulin over the hatch, until there was no hole for the water to get down but the small well in which we stood to steer, and that we so arranged that we could close it when necessary.

The last thing the boss did before battening down was to empty all the water that was left in the cask into a big bottle, which he took down aft and fastened up in his locker.

I didn't like that arrangement, so I said, "What are you doing that for?"

He answered, "I think I told you to mind your own business. I shan't tell you much more."

I got desperate, and called out, "That is my business; the water is as much mine as yours."

"No, it ain't," said he. "The water is all mine; anyhow, I've got it, and mean to keep it. There's not enough for two, and I think I can do with it all."

"But what am I to do?" I cried.

"Go without, Bruce, like many better men than you have done before. If you want a drink, there's plenty all round you; try that, but you don't get any of mine. You'll get used to the taste in time. I don't like it myself, and that's why I want the other. And perhaps, Bruce, we will both be full of it before this time to-morrow—rather too full for our healths. We perhaps will be full of it both inside and out, but not on the top of it. No, Bruce, we may be a few fathoms down, dining with the sharks; but we shan't enjoy ourselves much, for we won't know anything about it; but we will be quiet enough; and, my Christian friend, let me tell you it is not right to get excited over anything, and least of all over any danger. You're good now, ain't you? Of course you are! Then you can afford to go off the hooks first. You're pretty safe, don't you see; but I require a little more time to repent. I don't feel at all safe just now, and that's why I took the water all to myself. And now, Bruce, no more fooling! You see this pistol I've got in my hand. Well, if you try to best me, I'll blow your brains out; but I promise you this, that if we weather the storm coming up, you shall have

your fair share of the water—that is, if we sight land; but if we don't, then I'm sorry for you! I tell you, like a plain-speaking man, that I don't intend to die if by killing you I can live; and whether you get wiped out by shooting, or die of thirst, I don't care. I mean to live, if I have to eat you, boots and all. Understand?"

I thought I did, but said no more, and sat down waiting for the wind to come up.

After all the talk the boss became more pleasant, and spoke to me quite lively and nice, just as if he had never thought of such a thing as blowing my poor brains out.

Soon the sun went down in a great blaze of dirty red and yellow, looking as angry as he could, and as he dropped below the water he seemed to throw his great arms about through the clouds, and snatch hold of all the restless waves, and shake them up to make them as angry as himself, and then, in a sort of blood-red mist, he sunk right out of sight, and left us alone in the darkness.

The stars presently came out, and they, too, were not at all promising, but looked weary and worn out, as if they had suffered and were

sorry for something, and each one seemed ragged with a sort of misty fringe.

As we lay on the deck watching them, I thought I heard a dull moaning going on all round, but far off, and I told the skipper, who said that that sort of noise is nearly always heard before a big storm in these parts.

Presently little, little clouds began to cross the stars high up, getting lower and lower, till at last the wind reached us on the water.

CHAPTER VIII.

Beginning of the gale.—Tangible darkness.—Getting ready.—Floating anchor.—Lightning and Thunder.—Bad look-out to windward.—Terrible first wave.—Pinioned in the wreckage.—Complete sweep.—Upside-down sea.—Graveyard light.—Driving out misery.—Spiteful soliloquies.—A derelict barque.—Solid reef opening.—A terrible rough landing.

THE curious noise kept on rising and falling: one moment it would sound quite loud and close, the next it would be far away, almost dying off altogether.

The ship seemed to know there was something nasty about to happen, for she creaked and groaned as though alive, as she swung up and down the steep sides of the big black lumps of the troubled waters.

By-and-by stronger puffs of wind began to flap the sail, but only to die away almost as soon as they came up; and we recognised in them the messengers of the coming storm.

Then came, flying high against the stars,

bigger and more angry clouds, while away to the north-west, although it was not near day-break, the sky looked a dirty yellow, even in the middle of the black night so thick all round.

"We're in for it now, Bruce, and no error!" said the boss. "About midday to-morrow we shall be fighting for our lives, and shall have all we can do to get through, I'm sure."

The puffs then came up longer and stronger than ever, increasing every moment, until they settled down into a steady breeze, and we loosed sail and ran before it, but all was closely reefed down.

The stars next were completely put out of sight by the black, heavy clouds rolling up, and the wind began to get wilder every moment.

I don't think I ever saw it so dark before as it was when the stars went out; "the inside of a Solomon islander" wasn't a circumstance to it.

I felt as though I could take handfuls of darkness and throw them about; the only break was that yellow, rusty, wicked light away to windward; but even that appeared to be only another sort of black.

When the day broke, we could see no sun as he came up behind the big, dusty, thick clouds

which covered the sky all over, and nothing was to be seen from one end to the other of our watery world but these dirty, threatening messengers of wrath, as, from the north-west, whence the wind was coming, they were rolling up thicker and blacker than ever.

The sea was getting more uncomfortable all the time, for the wind, blowing across the swell, began to throw it up into lumps and break the long, regular lines of moving waves, no longer smooth and glassy.

Now and then, through a rent in the clouds, the sun would throw a great slanting path of light across the water, and appeared as if he would like to come out and stop all the dismal things going on below; and then he seemed to change his mind, as he suddenly would draw back, just as if he was ashamed to be seen in such a dirty-looking rumpus.

"It's no good going on like this," said the boss. "We had better round up while we can, and take it bows on, if it must come;" so we brought the schooner up, head to wind, and set to making all things as snug as possible.

We then closely furled the sails, putting preventer gaskets round them all, but left a little

bit of the mainsail showing, flattened and guyed out quite stiff, to act the same as the tail of a weathercock, and keep her pointing to the wind.

Then we lashed together all the lumber we could find—casks, spars, oars, anything that would float—which we chucked overboard, bent on to three of our strongest ropes, as a floating anchor; and after lashing the tiller amidships, we sat down to wait for what was to come.

For a long time we drifted slowly before the strong breeze, which did not increase so fast as we thought it would, but the sea from it, blowing across, became more troublesome every minute.

The heavy clouds still kept coming up blacker and blacker, till they closed in all round, and made it pretty nearly dark; and still the storm didn't break, till at last we began to think it wouldn't come at all; but there we were mistaken.

Lightning then began to play about all round, and loud thunder was heard growling and grumbling away out of sight, while heavy rain fell splashing on the deck with a loud rattle.

Suddenly the wind dropped entirely, and all was as still as the grave for a little while. I noticed the boss kept his eyes fixed to windward, where the lightning was flashing out brightly and the thunder rolling terribly; still, he kept very calm, but I saw that he was desperate also, as he made a line fast round his arm, to hold on to when the row began.

Presently he sung out, "By the Holy! here she comes! Hold on, Bruce! Hold on for your life! We shall be all right if we get over the first wave."

I was too confused and scared to take much notice then, but looking to windward I saw, right away on the sky line, the heavy black clouds torn to bits, just as though they had been burst with gunpowder, and from behind them big spouts of froth, white as snow, jumped up from the world below.

They then formed into a long line stretched across the whole sea, and rushed at an awful pace right towards us as hard as they could, leaping over and driving before them the big swells like feathers.

All the great clouds, jammed together, and crammed with lighting and thunder, came so low

that they appeared to touch the mast as they burst right into us.

The blinding flashes played all round and through us; the thunder crashed and roared, till my head felt crushed with the row; and the rain and hail came down in thick sheets as cold as ice, till the deck ran like a river, and the waist of the ship was nearly filled up.

All this happened with little or no wind near us, but it was fast coming up, and soon the salt spray, driven from off the tops of the waves, came flying over; and then we saw, roaring towards us, a great wave of water, higher than our mast, with the hurricane howling and raging behind it.

I had just time to throw myself flat on the deck, and hold on to a ringbolt like grim death, when it was on the top of us, and the little ship seemed to stand up on end, and then, with a great jerk, jump straight into the sky.

The last thing that I remember was seeing an enormous curl of angry water bending over us from high up in the air, and then an awful crashing, smashing row as it came down on the deck, shaking the little craft all over, just like breaking up.

I don't know at all how we got through with that contract, for the tumbling water knocked all the life out of me.

When I came to, I was pinned down to the deck with something across my back and legs, which wouldn't let me get up.

I called out for the boss, but got no answer; then I tried to turn round, but I couldn't—my bonds held me so fast to the deck.

"What the deuce is the meaning of this?" I said to myself. "I think that cursed fellow has been and tied me up while I was silly," and I sung out again louder than ever, but heard nothing but the howling and shrieking of the wind tearing through the ship, and the hissing and spitting of the water as it was being driven in spouts and fountains all over us.

Every now and then a big green sea would break right on board, and go very near drowning me, as I lay tied down on my face, and only just able to move my head a little.

The jerks and heaves of the ship were awful, as she jumped, with the wind, right out of the water, from one wave to another; and then in the deep hollows, where the wind couldn't get hold of her, she would pull up short, shiver all

through, then roll till she got near to going right over.

How I did curse that mate of mine! for I thought it was he who had made me fast, and was perhaps down in the cabin drinking, or sitting quietly aft, looking at me and enjoying the sight.

At last I thought that it was strange that he hadn't fixed my hands at the same time, and I began to feel for the ropes that held me, and soon discovered what was the matter.

Nobody had tied me up at all, but the Lord in His mercy had saved my life by a miracle, and but for the broken rigging tangling me up with the stump of the mainmast, I certainly should have been washed over with the boss when we went through the first wave.

It was more than the crashing of the water that I heard then: it was the smashing of the masts out of the ship, and the tearing of the bulwarks from her decks.

With my knife I soon cut myself loose, and on my hands and knees crawled aft towards the stern, holding on to anything till I got to the steering place, where, with a line, I made myself fast, for the ship was jumping about like the

very devil, and the seas were pouring over her so fast that I was afraid of going overboard.

Once more in my life I thought it was all up with me, and I prayed to the Lord to save me this time, and I thought He would, for why should He stop me from going to the sharks along with the poor boss if He wanted me to die after all?

As I sat there, all wet through, smashed up and very sorrowful, I prayed as I never prayed before. And it gave me strength to live on; all the devil went out of me, and I promised to be really good if ever I got to shore again.

There are no words which can describe that storm properly; the poor little schooner was frightfully knocked about.

No masts, no bowsprit, the bulwarks all torn away—in fact, everything was wrecked. But, thank God! the tarpaulin over the hatch stood all right—the boss knew well what he was doing when he made me nail that on.

The sky was terribly wild, and the gale howled and screeched as it tore the huge waves to shreds and threw them high aloft in white foamy showers.

The dismal, dirty, angry clouds were flying

quick as lightning across the sky, quite low down, and twisted and curled themselves like horrid flat serpents, crawling about to swallow everything they should meet, and some of them, blown to bits by the raging hurricane, hung down their ragged streamers, almost sweeping the boiling waters.

Sometimes on the top of a big sea, right in the middle of its seething crest, the little ship would twist round, almost broaching to, and then all would have been over, but the floating anchor, which, thank God! still held fast, would pull her bows up to the storm again, and then, head first, down we would go with such a rush to the other side as took away my breath and made me shut my eyes through fright. It was just the same feeling as coming down in a very big swing.

At the bottom, with eyes shut and stopped ears, so as not to see those enormous walls of water with their great white moving crests, and not to hear the terrific howling of the wind, for a little time you could think you were in a calm; down there there was no wind at all, and the water was quite smooth; but that would last for only one little minute.

Presently the next wave would come along, shove itself under the craft, and then the wretched thing, shivering and shaking in every plank, would climb the great hill-side till she burst through the surf on the top, right in the teeth of the gale, almost driven under for good by the weight of the angry water falling on her like a lot of hissing devils trying to tear plank from plank.

The sight of those raging seas was tremendous and fearful; the whole world was at war—at least, all the world I saw—and the sky was so disturbed and blown about that it looked like the sea turned upside down, while below, as far as the eye could reach, was nothing but foam and flying spray, jumping and hurling themselves aloft from the immense green seas.

The clouds, with their ragged bellies, hung down very low, and the tormented spouts of white sea-drift, torn from the crested swells by the raging wind, appeared to fall in snow-wreaths against them.

When it got dark, it was worse than ever. I thought it bad enough when I could see to get drowned, and the horror was doubled by the murky darkness.

"The waves ran all over me, but I was too tired to care."

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However, it was not quite dark, but much more nasty, for wherever the water broke there was a pale, dim, graveyard light—the light people say that dead men like.

When the waves struck the ship and threw up showers of spray all shining into the black air, I could see in it some dead sailor's ghost coming for me, and would shut my eyes in fright; and when the drops fell flashing on me, I could feel the dead man's hand trying to pull me off to the depths below, where he had left his bones; while the wind, howling above, shouted out—and I could hear the water say so too—"Come along, Bruce! Your time's up! Your time's up!"

Then I would open my eyes again to see the whole ship, from stem to stern, burning dully with this dreadful, ghostly, wet fire.

By-and-by I got quite done up—so far gone that I fell asleep; but not quite that, because for a long time I felt every wave that tumbled on board. They ran all over me, but I was too tired to care, and thought that I might just as well die as carry on any more at that rate.

I fell properly to sleep at last, and when I woke, cold, wet, and miserable, it was broad

daylight, and the force of the hurricane was broken, but still it was blowing very hard.

The big, tumbling sea was going down fast, and becoming more regular; the clouds had gone back to their proper places and colours, and the sun shone out clear and warm, promising better things to come.

The water still came on board, but not like it did the day before ; and, feeling weak, hungry, and thirsty, I cast myself loose to look for something to eat and drink.

I crept carefully to the companion hatch, holding on like grim death, and opening it, I got quickly through, just in time to close it against a big lump of green sea that swept over the whole length of the craft.

Looking round, in the boss's locker I found the jar of water he talked so cruelly to me about, but first I drove the misery out of me with a long pull at the grog bottle.

That warmed me up and gave me strength and life. I mixed some more, and whilst drinking it and eating some biscuit, I thought to myself, "I think you've made a mistake, my dear boss ; all this sweet water is for me—not you. Thank you very much for taking all this

care of it for me, likewise the grog. I can assure you that it comes in very nicely just now. I shall drink all this nice water, my dear old chap, because I know that if you come back from outside, you won't want any, as you have, no doubt, got used to the other sort by this time; but when you go to the devil, you'll get none at all. Here's your very good health in this nice, cool, sweet water you took so much care of, all for me. D—mn you!"

I talked to myself like that for some time, and then laid down on the floor and went to sleep.

Before the sun went down, I was up on deck again, and found everything much calmer, but still there was a strong gale blowing, and a heavy sea running.

I could do no good there, so I determined to take shelter below; but before I went down, I took a good look round, and there, right away to the west, I saw the three masts of a ship.

Each time the waves threw me aloft I saw her, with all her topmasts gone, and bits of canvas streaming out on the wind from her lower stumps.

Sometimes she was broadside on, and other

times her bow or stern would swing round and look my way, and from that I knew it was not all right on board of her.

I watched her until it got dark, and by that time she was a long way down to leeward, for, standing high out of the water, the wind caught hold, and sent her along quicker than me.

When the night came, I went below; but before I turned in I drank the boss's health again, and thanked him for the nice cool water he so kindly left me. I knew he was only joking when he said he wanted it all himself, and that he would kill and eat me if he liked.

Perhaps he thought when he stepped out of the ship and hid himself in that big wave, on purpose to give me a chance at the water, that I would go back for him; but I was afraid I had no time, being in a great hurry to get on shore; besides that, I had his own word that there was not enough of the cool, nice water for two men, so I was obliged to keep it all myself. In my silliness I said, "Excuse me, Mr. Boss, I'm very sorry, so good night. D—mn you!"

I slept very well that night, and in the morning, at break of day, I was glad to see a lot of birds sailing round and round the ship, which

told me that land was not very far off, and looking over the stern, a long way off, I thought I saw it.

Still, however, the sea and wind both kept very high, but decreasing in force slowly, and before the middle of the day I was sure what I had seen in the morning was land, and, drifting nearer and nearer, the current and wind set me right on to it as it grew quite fast out of the water.

By-and-by I spied a long white line of breakers between me and the high land far beyond it, and, set in the middle, I saw a black spot, which, at first, I took for an opening in the reef.

But what use was that to me, for I had no masts, no sails, no anything to work the boat; if the whole reef was openings, I could go nowhere but where the wind chose to take me.

I watched what I thought was the channel entry for a long time, till at last I distinguished against the sky two things like sticks, standing on each side of it.

"Thank goodness!" said I to myself; "some white men live hereabouts, and have put those beacons up to mark the channel. Thank God! I'll soon be right now."

On looking again, to my astonishment I saw a big wave roll in and break right against it, and said, "How the deuce can a wave break like that against a hole? It can't; but there goes another, and, by golly! right over the sticks, too."

I found out then all about it, and my heart sank when it was a wreck of a ship I had been looking at, and thought it was, no doubt, the remains of that one I had seen the day before, twisting round and round helplessly.

Presently I got within a mile of the reef, and saw the enormous seas rolling in one after the other, pounding themselves to atoms on the sharp coral rocks; and I could plainly hear the growling and the thunder they made as they tried again and again to smash their way to the high land, lying bright and green in the sunlight about five miles beyond.

When lifted up on a big wave, I could see that all was smooth on the other side of the foaming barrier of coral, and dotted all over the calm lagoon were numerous sand-banks, and, scattered here and there, small islands, with two or three trees upon them.

Things began now to look very serious for me, as every moment I got closer and closer to

the seething, raging breakers, piling themselves high, so horribly high! as they met and struggled with the waters of the last swell bouncing back seawards.

As they came together, they would appear to stop for a minute, and raising, in opposition, a bigger white crest than ever, curl over like a great claw, make a fast run in, and smash down on the coral with a deafening roar, louder than the loudest thunder.

Then up would jump the foaming water, white as snow, high into the air, all hissing and spitting; and while it hung quivering there, floating like the lightest feathers, the shining sun would give it a lovely fringing of all colours; then, in a moment, all would go down, to make room for the next swell to do likewise.

All this was very nice to look at from the inside, but it was quite another thing from my point of view, with the certainty of having to go through that boiling surf.

I quite lost my head looking at the billows raging, and did nothing until I got quite close, then I suddenly thought that the faster I went the better chance I should have of being thrown right clear of the rocks, so I ran to the bows to

cut loose the floating anchor; but before I could finish the job an enormous roller took entire charge of the craft.

Round and round we spun on the top of its great curling crest, with big jerks and tugs; the ship appeared to be tearing to pieces, and everything seemed to me to be falling down, jumping up, and going all sorts of ways; the sky and the water, in my sight, were mixed up together, with the sun dancing all around them.

The water poured all over me, shrieking and snarling, as I held on for bare life to the stump of the mast; till at last we made a spring right into the sky, and then down we came.

Everything crumbled away like dust beneath me. I fancied I saw the whole world open and let me through, and then I remember nothing till I found myself stretched out on a little sandy spot, thrown up by the storm, just inside the reef, and lying half in the water; and lucky for me it was that I arrived head first.

CHAPTER IX.

Saved on a sand-bank.—Five miles from land.—Wreck to the eastward.—Voyage of inspection.—Shepherded by sharks.—The blackbirder again.—On deck in the moonlight.—Awful sight.—Corpse of the one-eyed skipper.—Sharks better company.—They wait for me.—Devil about again.—Awkward visitors.—Taken prisoner.—Back to the wreck.—The skipper's head.—A noisy crew.—Through the surf.—River scenery.—Savages at home.—Unwittingly a cannibal.—Pile of human heads.

I GOT up, feeling very bad from the shaking I received on landing, and looked about for the schooner, but not one little bit of her was to be seen ; all was smashed up upon that cruel, sharp reef, where the swells were still hammering as hard as ever, and looking viciously at me ; but it was no good then, for I was on the right side of them this time.

About five or six miles to the south was the mainland, looking like the end of some very large island, with mountains, rising higher and higher behind one another, as far as I could see, covered all over with trees.

Close down at the edge of the water I saw lots of smoke going up in blue, curly columns, standing out quite plain against the dark green hills, and proclaiming the presence of some sort of humankind.

Away down to the east was the wreck, which I took for a hole in the reef on coming in; it was only about half a mile off, so I determined to pay it a visit, if I could, for I was dying of thirst, and perhaps I should find water there, or some sort of means to get on shore.

When the tide went down, it left all the long line of reef quite bare, so I swam off to the rocks, from my little sandy island, and started off, walking along the coral towards the ship I wanted to see.

The big rollers still thundered on the outside edge of the rocks, but they couldn't hurt me, the water was too low; but I could see how lucky I was to have been cast ashore while it was high tide: if I had come any other time, there would have been no John King Bruce left, for certain.

Going along, I kept close to the shore-side of the reef, and saw a great many big sharks in quite shallow water, watching me

with their wicked little pig eyes, and slowly cruising as fast as I travelled, evidently keeping me company.

If I stopped, they stopped too, and when I went on, the brutes followed me, as much as to say: "We're waiting for you, old nigger! You'll perhaps make our closer acquaintance before you get on shore. Anyway, we are in no very particular hurry for you, as we have just had a good feed from that wreck over there."

I got riled at all this attention, and threw big stones at them. They didn't care a bit, but followed me all the same.

As I neared the wreck, I felt there was something about it that I appeared to know; and, by the holy poker! when I got under the stern I did know her. She was that Peruvian blackbirder I ran away from a long time before!

I almost danced with joy to think that she had come to grief at last; but, thinking a little, I got frightened, and hid myself close alongside the rudder, under the stern, for I thought that awful one-eyed skipper might be on board with a gun, and if he saw me, he was bound to put a bullet through me.

I stopped there for some time, listening to

hear if any one was moving about, but all was quiet as the grave, and the only sound was the water, which had filled her up at high tide, as she came through the surf on the reef, pouring slowly out of her, and splashing on the rocks below.

At last I came out, and walked right round her, but saw no big holes, which told me that the water must have got into her from the deck, through the seas washing on board; but how she got so high up on the reef, all comfortable, when my little craft was smashed up altogether, I never could make out.

Perhaps, when the storm came on, the crew broke into the spirit-room, got drunk, and forgot to put on the hatches,—a thing very likely, I thought, with such a lot of rascals as there was on board that ship.

I caught hold of a rope hanging over the side, and climbed up on deck, when, just as I thought, not one of the hatches were on, the thick glass of the cuddy sky-lights was smashed in, and the whole ship was full of water; but, Lord! what a clean sweep of everything there was. Everything was washed away; there was nothing at all left on deck.

The galley was gone, the wheel gone,—no wonder I'd seen her twisting and turning round the day before,—the bulwarks all smashed, not a bit of the foremast and bowsprit to be seen, and only the stumps of the main and mizen masts standing.

I soon found the scuttle-butt, and, thank goodness! there was a lot of good water in it; and, after a long drink, feeling rather tired, I picked out a soft plank aft, and went to sleep under the shade of the only piece of the bulwarks left.

When I woke up, it was night, but the moon and stars were brightly shining; the wind and sea had both gone down, and all was nice and quiet.

I got up and walked about, because I didn't know what to do until daylight, and I went right up into the bows, and, leaning over, listened to the drip of the water running out of the vessel, and the sound of the waves—gentler now—rubbing themselves, with a queer sort of humming, dreary song, along the rough coral rocks on the outside edge of the reef.

I stopped like this, listening, in the broad moonlight, for a long time, and then I went

aft, and, passing the main hatch, I saw that the ship was still half full of water.

Going on, I took a look down the broken sky-light, and I thought I saw something shining floating about, so I went down on my knees, to get a better look at it, and there I saw, with a most devilish grin, mocking and nodding at me, all green, and glistening with dull, ghostly fire, looking straight in my eyes, the dead face of that d——d one-eyed skipper!

The sight curled up my blood; I felt my hair rise up on end with horror, as I tried to get up and run away; but I couldn't while he glared at me so hard, with his hellish stare, and kept my face fixed close to his.

I tried to sing out, but it was no use—he wouldn't let me; and as he looked about in the water—oh, so horribly!—he seemed to be telling me something that I couldn't understand.

At last the swelling water turned his fearful face a little way from me, his eye lost mine; then up I sprung with a frightened shout, jumped right off the ship on to the reef, and though the water was up to my waist, I tore along through it, sometimes running, sometimes

swimming, till I got to my little sand-bank, where I tumbled down and fainted.

How I got through those sharks astonished me, but I suppose I frightened the brutes with my yells and splashings, for there was enough water all along the way I came for them to catch me, and the last part was swimming in deep water to the island.

Anyhow, at the time I was so scared that I much preferred to go along with the sharks to stopping on board that cursed ship, for I was afraid that more ghosts would come back and look at me.

How long I stopped all of a heap on that sand-bank I don't know, but when I came to the sun was pouring down on me, blazing hot, and I felt so bad and thirsty that it drove me crazy again.

At last I could stand it no longer, and I thought I would go back to the ship for water.

I was not afraid then, for I knew that ghosts didn't run about in daylight; but I wouldn't have passed another night on board for all the gold in the world.

Up I got, but one glance showed me that the

trip could not be done, for the tide was full up, making it deep water all the way to the ship; and, further, it was impossible for me, in my weakness, to swim it, even if the sharks would have let me.

There they were—three of them—just on the edge of my island, their ugly flat noses resting on the sand, nearly out of the water, waiting for me; and a little way out in the deep, between me and the wreck, their pointed grey fins were cutting the smooth surface in all directions.

I began to talk to them, and said, just as though they could hear me: "No, no, my beauties! Under the present circumstances, the journey is not good enough for me. I shall wait now until the reef is dry. It is no use you inviting me to breakfast like this. You've got too big a mouth for me, and too many teeth; and that's not fair. Oh, no! Presently I shall walk to that ship, and then you can all come ashore, if you want to dine with me."

The sun and the thirst, I think, now drove me quite mad; and as I sat close to the edge of the bright, clear water, watching two of those monstrous sharks, not more than three yards

off, I thought that one was like that bosen's mate I killed at Callao, and the other that chap whose throat I cut on board the blackbirder over there.

They both winked at me; and, as they turned over, they grinned, and showed their flashing, cruel teeth, as sharp as razors.

As they did that, I thought I saw that one had a great cut mark across the throat, and on the other, right through the side, was a big, bloody-red splash; and then I was afraid the devil was round about after me again.

While I sat watching these fish demons, they kept winking at me, and I could think they were saying: "Come along, Bruce; you look very hot, tired, and thirsty up there. Come along: it's nice and cool here, and we never get thirsty, but are always hungry."

Then they would wag their tails, and sort of lick their chops, getting ready for me; but I wasn't quite so mad as to go to them just then; and, turning round, threw myself down on my face, so as not to see them any more.

In a little time I took another look, but they had gone, and I was glad, and thanked the Lord that he had made me strong enough to

fight the devil out, for I'm certain Old Nick sent those sharks to tempt me.

Though the water had gone down considerably, there was still too much for me to travel safely to the ship with those fish friends of mine cruising about somewhere near, so I laid down, and went to sleep.

It appeared to me that I had but just closed my eyes when I was certain I heard light footsteps rustling in the loose sand, and men's voices talking very low.

I didn't raise my head, for I was afraid that the devil had sent me some other horrid sight, to drive all the sense left right out of me.

The talking went on like small humming, quite close, and then stopped, when all was quiet as the grave, and nothing was heard but the gentle whispering of the water lapping against the sand.

I didn't dare lift my head, all the same, and was thinking of what I should do, when suddenly there came a terrific yell, as if all the devils from the regions below were loose for a holiday, and at the same time a prick of a spear or something sharp brought me upstanding.

I found myself in the middle of a ring of

the most ferocious savages that I ever experienced before or after.

There was no mild, simple, child-like, trusting look about those chaps, but very much the other way; and as they grinned at me, and showed their teeth, almost as big as the sharks', I thought I had got to the end of my last journey.

They were a horrible looking crowd, and a very hungry one, too, which I thought was all the worse for me.

They were stark naked, all but a little waist cloth, which seemed to be more useful for sticking knives and tomahawks in than for covering; but I was glad to see those things, as I knew they could have only got them from white men, and perhaps there were some about.

Their hair was piled into a big mop, tied up with string, and stood quite two feet above them, and if they thought their faces pretty, it was more than I did.

Their bodies and faces were painted all sorts of colours,—blue, red, and yellow,—stuck all over them in filthy patches.

All carried great clubs, or spears; but the old chap who did boss had a gun, that he was im-

mensely proud of, no doubt, but from its look I thought I should not like to have the job of firing it off.

This chap came up to me from the mob and began to talk, but of course I couldn't understand a word he said, so I pointed to my mouth and made signs for drink.

A few words, and one fellow went down to the canoes, and brought me a cocoanut shell full of water.

My word! wasn't it delicious! I never tasted anything half so good, not even on that fishing island.

When I'd finished drinking, the chief came right up to me, and, looking in my face, he touched it, and then talked a lot to his crowd.

He made signs for me to sit down, and one of the chaps bringing up a bit of wet rag, he scrubbed my face with it till I thought he would have rubbed all the skin off; then they made me take off my shirt and trousers, and seemed surprised that I was the same colour all over.

I knew then that they thought I was a white man painted black.

Before, in England, on board that Yankee man-of-war, and on the blackbirder, I used to

curse my colour day after day; but this was the third time it had saved my life, and I now blessed it.

After some more talk, they took me down to the canoes, and off we paddled to the wreck, and got on board.

They took no notice of me, as they were all too busy getting all the iron and rope they could find; so I was left to myself.

I was not now afraid of that old skipper, so I went straight aft and looked down the cuddy sky-light, but saw nothing of him.

The water was by this time all out of the ship,—I suppose some plank at the bottom had burst and let it out,—so down the main hatch I went, to see what was there.

As I went through the old quarters, where I'd talked many a time with the one-eyed devil, I almost expected to see the brute sitting, as he always used to, on his locker at the end of the cabin; but I found no signs of him.

I thought I might find his ugly carcass, that I saw floating about the other night, but nothing was to be seen.

I then went forward into the hold, and, Lord a mercy! what a sight I saw!

There, all round the ship's sides, and chained to the floor, were fifty or sixty poor devils of islanders that rascally pirate had stolen from their homes, lying just as the brute had fixed them, all drowned and dead!

I ran away from that terrible sight as quick as I could, and went on deck.

Looking round and over the side at the fine, big canoes floating a little way off in the deep water, what did I see, in the biggest one, but the ugly head of that one-eyed skipper, stuck on a spear, and tied up in the bows like a flag!

He still kept that devilish look on him, and seemed to stare straight at me; but I didn't care when I saw his head and carcass in two bits.

Talk about that, I saw his body, a little time afterwards, all cut to pieces with axes and knives, and thumped flat with clubs, and this didn't make me think that these chaps were fond of white men, and I thanked the Lord again that I was black.

By-and-by, when the canoes were as full of plunder as they could hold, they put me in the biggest, with the old chief, and off we went, singing and yelling, for the shore.

The only two things not joining in the shout-

ing row were the blackbirder's head and me. He couldn't, because he hadn't brought his body with him,—which I thought he was very much better without,—and I wouldn't, because I was too much a stranger in those parts to cut in without invitation.

Our canoe was a very big one, holding about a hundred men, who paddled her on each side, and threw up the spray all over the place as they sent her flying through the water, so lively as to make her nearly jump out of it at every stroke they gave.

The old chief squatted down on a flat place in the bow, where he made me keep close alongside of him.

As we neared the shore, we got into the mouth of a big river, coming down quite fast between two tall mountains; but before we entered, there was a tumbling bar of breaking water, just where the river, rushing down, meets the tide coming up.

There it was, right in front of us, leaping and frothing up fearfully high, looking very nasty indeed.

The old chief then stood up, and dancing and yelling, sung out something to his savages amid loud screams.

Then, by golly! didn't they all go mad! and the way they worked their paddles was a caution: you could hardly see them move, they went so quick.

They threw the water in clouds behind them, tearing the boat along, almost lifting her right out of the lagoon, till with a big shout they actually flung her right through the raging surf into the calm river beyond.

It was very funny, from that side, to see the other canoes follow.

From the river you could see nothing at all but the wall of water fighting the sea, trying to get in, and the two together in the scrimmage, beating and tearing themselves into clouds of angry foam.

The boat on the other side was not to be seen, but, listening attentively, their shouts could be heard above the hissing of the struggling waters, coming nearer and nearer, getting louder and louder, till in the middle of the snow-white spray would dart into sight something long and dark, with arms and legs, as it were, all working and flashing as quick as lightning.

Then the wild yell would burst out, the canoe jump from out of the watery cloud, and stand-

ing almost upright, slip down the back of the wave, and there would be the canoe floating quietly on the river's bosom, when a little baling put her as right as ever she was.

The river was a grand one, and looking so nice and cool. The hills rising straight up from it on each bank kept the sun from making it too hot, and the big bush trees, with a thick belt of cocoanuts waving their long arms in the gentle blowing wind, came right down to the very edge of the water.

Every little bit we journeyed the stream appeared to end against the side of the mountains, rising higher and higher, rolling one above the other, like monstrous green waves, till they quite lost themselves in the sky far inland.

These endings were, however, only bends in the river, on rounding which, just the same view was seen: there was the end in sight, which never came.

By-and-by it got wider, and suddenly turning a high corner, with a spit of sand running out quite far, the land opened flat on both sides, and right on the brim of a sloping white beach was a town, looking lovely and snug in the shady

heap was made of the heads of white men, and on the top of the pile, looking as if they didn't appreciate the kind attentions of my friends the natives, was all that was left of the two gentlemen who hated me so much,—the second and third mates of that blackbirder on the reef,—and the rest of the heap was the crew.

It was very wrong, I know, but I couldn't help liking that sight, for I knew I was safe with all those brutes out of the way.

As I turned them over with my foot, I recognised lots of men's faces who had sworn they would be square with me some time or other; and so they would have been if they had got me on shore; and I laughed to see how they were mistaken!

The poor nigger had beaten them, after all—skipper, mates, and every one!

CHAPTER X.

Cannibal remnants.—An unearthly hail.—Stopping a runaway.—Meat for the oven.—Recognition.—A few friendly remarks.—Advantages of colour.—Man meat for breakfast.—A shake from a dead hand.—"Who was the man I eat?"—More heads.—Killing long pork.—Butcher's shop.—A *bonne bouche*.—Cannibal feast.—Securing a captive.—Bright and gay scenes.—Arcadian bowers.—Beautiful girls.—A friendly fight.—Receiving visitors.—Unceremonious adieux.

My two companions, seeing me joyful, made signs that they had eaten the rest of those chaps, pointing at the same time to a heap of bones piled up round a big fireplace, and they showed me how they sat down in a ring to enjoy their horrid feast, and threw the well-picked bones to one side.

The thoughts of this made me feel quite sick, and I was just turning round to go back to the house and get breakfast, when I was terribly frightened to hear some one sing out quite loud: "Bruce! Bruce! For the Lord's sake, come here!"

It made me so afraid that I could scarcely stand, for I thought that Old Nick was after me again; that he had got all those chaps fast down below, and wanted me to make up the crew, so he had made those ugly heads sing out.

I was fearfully scared, and when I heard the voice cry out again, "Bruce! Bruce! come here!" I took to my heels, and ran off for the house.

The two natives thought I was running away altogether, so one of them threw his club, which hit me such a punch in the back that it sent me flat to the ground.

That stopped my running at once. I didn't want any more clubbing, so I lay still until they picked me up.

They took me first into a house close by, and by the Holy! there were two of my old-friends, the blackbirders, tied up as tight as could be to the posts of the house; and it was those chaps who had sung out to me, and not the devil's heads.

I was so glad of that, for it scared me awfully to think that Satan was trying to get me again, after I had turned good.

"For the Lord's sake, let us loose, Bruce!"

they said. "We have been tied up like this for more than two days, without water or grub, and those savages have eaten all the other men right before us. For mercy's sake, cut us loose, or kill us!"

These were two of the beauties who had threatened me most on board ship, and now wanted me to help them; but I knew they would have killed me as soon as they would a rat, so I said,—

"I can't, my dear friends, for I'm a prisoner just like you are. This dark gentleman here has but just now nearly knocked the back off me, because I walked a little fast when he was in no hurry; and if I let you loose now, he will hammer my head into little bits, and put it on the heap, amongst those other chaps.

"No;- I think you are very nice where you are; nice and safe, till these gentlemen get hungry; and, besides all that, I think you are a pair of too d——d rascals to let loose.

"If you were set free, perhaps you would begin blackbirding in these poor chaps' town, and carry them all away in that hooker of yours, with a big hole in her, out there on the reef, and put them alongside of those poor devils you

drowned in the hold, all chained down to the deck.

"You don't like, I see, the other side of the game. Not nice, is it? Never mind, you'll be useful for once in your lives when you go into the oven; and I don't think it will be long before that event comes off, as these black chaps get very ravenous after work, and will soon go through two such lean chaps as you.

"And just listen, you chaps! It's because I'm about the same colour as these men that they don't tie me up like you, and invite me to dinner.

"How about 'd——d black nigger' now, eh? 'D——d black nigger' now is much better than white 'long pork,' all tied up ready for sticking.

"No; I don't think it good enough to let you go. Besides, my late boss told me never to meddle with other people's business in these parts, because it is dangerous; and I respect his advice and memory; so good-bye, my Christian friends! I don't think I shall miss you much when you're gone, and hope I shall get over the slight bereavement in time, and that you will both enjoy your next dinner. It will be your

faults if the others don't. So good-bye, my friends, good-bye."

Golly! how those two sinners did curse and swear at me as I left them; I heard them roaring all the way down the town, as I went to the house I was stopping in.

Closely followed by those two natives, who were suspicious of my bolting again, I went in, sat down, and made signs that I was hungry.

One of them then got down a basket, the same one they gave me the grub out of the night before, and threw me down some yams, and a piece of meat, roasted brown and crackly, like pork.

It looked like a long bone of something, just the same sort of meat as they gave me before.

I was so hungry that I didn't inspect it closely, but tackled it at once, and had just got my teeth into it for a big mouthful, when I saw that the other end of it was a man's hand!

Everything then appeared to swim round me in horror, and in my fright the baked hand appeared to catch hold of mine like a vice, so tightly that, for all the world, I couldn't let go, though I tried hard; an', O Lord! how sick I did feel!

At last, with a shout of madness, I flung the awful thing away from me, and jumped up to fly anywhere, but my two friends soon had me down on the floor again, and this time they made me fast to the house-post.

Presently I got cool again, quite shivering with disgust at the awful meal I had made the day before, which, for certain, was human flesh, and part of one of my former shipmates!

It was horrible to think that at the time I liked it; but if I had known what it was I would rather have starved a hundred times than have touched the dreadful stuff.

When the natives saw that I was quiet, they cast me loose, and I finished my breakfast on yam alone; and from that time I never took meat of any sort, but lived on fish and yams; but many a time I couldn't help wondering who was the chap I eat a piece of.

About sunset, the chief and all the boats came back with lots more things from the wreck, and in one of the canoes was piled up the heads of those poor fellows who were drowned all chained up in the hold.

The savages wanted them for the skulls, which they collect to put round their towns and

houses; and the more of them they have the more they are pleased.

These heads they put in a heap alongside the others, and then they lit up a fire in a deep hole in the ground, lined with stones, and while it was burning, they all went and sat down in the house where those two blackbirders were tied up.

I knew what they were going to do, and tried hard to keep away from the awful sight, but I couldn't, for something seemed to push me nearer and nearer, until I found myself in the house where the cannibal savages were sitting round those two fellows, quite silently, looking at them as a butcher would look at a pig he was about to kill.

Presently, when the inspection was over, the chief said something, two men got up, and holding the poor devils by the hair with one hand, as they stood tied to the posts, they dragged their heads right back, till their throats were quite tight, and then, with two or three slashes of their big knives, they cut them right off the struggling bodies.

The red blood spouted high into the air, as the butchers flung the heads, all winking and

rolling their eyes, along the floor to the feet of the chief, who, taking them by the hair, held them up, and said a word or two to his people.

When I saw the blood, I didn't feel queer, as I used, but was quite fascinated, and couldn't get away, although I wanted to; something stronger than me kept me there looking on.

After the killing, in came the old women, untied the bodies, took them outside, and hanging them up by the heels to a tree, poured water over them, and scraped them, just as they do pigs at home.

When that was done, they were dressed, and the liver and heart those disgusting savages cut into small bits and eat, all bloody and raw as they were.

The carcasses were then taken down, and the two butchers cut them into quarters and pieces to suit the oven.

By this time the fire had burnt down, the ashes were swept out clean, and wet mats put on the hot stones; then the "long pork," as the beach-combers call it, was put in, more wet mats were placed on the top, and the whole lot covered over with stones and earth.

All the mob then went to lie down, to rest, after their hard work, till dinner was ready; and soon all were as fast asleep as if they had done nothing wrong at all.

About three hours after, away they all went to the end of the town again, and sat down in a big ring all round the oven, which was smoking and steaming finely.

When all was ready, the chief squatted down in the middle, with a lot of big banana leaves, about three feet broad, spread out before him.

This done, the earth and stones were taken off the oven, then two or three cooks took up the disgusting meat, all hot and steaming, wrapped it up in leaves, and put it down in front of the chief.

There are always parts of any animal, at a feast, that particularly belong to the head man, and when it is a man that the brutes are feasting off, it is thought the palm of the hand is the best part, and that goes to the chief, before others get their share.

Well, after they had twisted off the hands and a piece of a forearm for him, he took a mouthful or two; then said something,

when two men—the same chaps who cut up the bodies—divided the rest, looking so deadly white, into many lots.

At the same time the cannibal ring broke up into little mobs, as, I suppose, families, and each one sent a man to get their share, who then went back with his loathsome burden, all steaming hot.

Then the head of each family took the grub, and, with his hands and knife, cut and tore it into little lumps, and, as he dragged a handful off the bones, he chucked it here and there to his people, just like throwing bones to dogs, and very soon all that was visible to the naked eye of my late poor friends was a heap of bones, picked as clean as they well could be.

Those two didn't last long with such a hungry crew, and all was over in about ten minutes.

The chief appeared to be rather delicate on this occasion, and only picked one of the hands; the other, with a piece of arm on, he packed up in a leaf, and took it to the house, where it was put away in the same basket I had my awful feed from.

When we got back to the house, the two

natives who had kept watch over me began talking to the old man, every now and then pointing at me, in a great state of excitement.

I suppose they told him that I had tried to run away, and a lot of lies about the trouble they were put to getting me back.

Whatever they said, I don't know, but I soon felt the effects of their talk, for a dozen of the brutes came for me, and held me down on the floor, whilst the old gentleman himself, with a sharp shell, cut a lot of slits in the soles of my feet, which the devils, the whole time I was with them, never allowed to heal, so that I could not walk away from their town, but was kept lame, hopping about on two sticks.

One morning, at daybreak, as I was hobbling about the village as best I could, I noticed that the natives were overhauling their bundles of fine things for dressing—bright-coloured feathers, shell necklaces, and all that sort of thing. All the crowd appeared to be joyful and happy, as if something nice was going to happen; and badly it was wanted, to take away the taste of that horrible feast, still hanging round.

Now and then mobs of men and women

would go, singing their loudest merry songs, skylarking, and playing with one another, as they bounded down the path like goats, to the bush, into which they disappeared altogether out of sight, just as if some great green monster had swallowed them up for good.

The old men were not in the least excited, but sat all in a ring in front of the big house, I suppose arranging how things were to come oft that day; and they seemed just as serious about it as if they were making up a fight.

I knew it wasn't that though, for not one spear or club was to be seen through the whole town, not a single one; all were put on one side, high up in the roofs of the houses.

At times singing was heard a long way off in the bush, coming nearer and nearer, till it burst right out into the open, and there were the bush parties to be seen coming back, loaded up with lovely green, brown, and yellow leaves, and beautiful creepers, flashing splendidly with flowers of a hundred bright colours.

Bundles and bundles of these treasures of the bush they brought, of every showy hue in existence, and threw them down in a heap, with big shouts, till the place looked as though

a rainbow had got wrecked there, in the middle of a tumbling sea of green.

Amongst these were heaps of berries of the brightest scarlet, to be made into necklaces, which looked all the more fiery, and like real light, when they stood out in vivid contrast with the dark skins of the people who wore them. Then all hands set to work, weaving the creepers into long ropes, spangling them all over with bright flowers, peeping out from under the hanging green leaves in all their modest beauty.

These were twisted round the posts of the house like great green serpents, with their scales all glistening in the sun, blazing with coloured spots.

From the top of the roof also were hung, in gay festoons, these flowery ropes, so thickly that, at last, the dull brown house was changed into the most lovely leafy bower possible to be seen.

All this time mobs of young girls, chattering and laughing gaily, as they worked in the middle of a perfect sea of flowers, were dexterously making them into wreaths and crowns; and the whole crowd looked, and were, so innocent, light-hearted, and joyous that I could

scarcely think that these were the same people who made that horrible feast but a little time back.

They were now so meek, mild, and simple that I tried to think that the dreadful sight I saw was only a dream, but one small look at the far end of the village told a tale of brutality, for there, in the midst of all this jollity going on, was that ugly heap of heads, with that one-eyed scoundrel's on a spear, sticking right out above the lot of them.

When the houses were finished, every one, men, women, and children, went to dress, but soon came out again, fearfully and wonderfully arrayed, and sat under the trees, in the shade, just as proud of themselves as the very devil.

The girls, with their bodies shining with oil, could scarcely move, from the amount of fine dresses they had managed to put on; all the finery they possessed was in full view, and round their necks, waists, and across the shoulders, or anywhere one would hang, they wore lovely garlands of leaves and flowers.

Their frizzy hair, stiff with grease, was combed and brushed up as high as it would go, ornamented with gaudy streamers, and crowned

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with wreaths dazzling in sparkling colours, and, although they were not so good looking as the girls here in Samoa, being the first I had ever seen dressed up, I thought them very handsome.

The men were rigged out pretty much alike, covered with wreaths, crowns, and garlands, and wore over their oily, naked bodies bright scarlet necklaces of chillies and other bush berries.

A few of them were dressed in nothing but leaves, slung round the waist, the head covered with a cap made out of banana leaves, and tufts of green stuff tied round wrists, elbows, and ankles; in fact there was such a lot of it about them that they looked like so many walking trees.

The whole gang soon settled down in a big ring; the women and men separate, and the chief and three of his oldest friends sitting in the middle; but those chaps in green leaves, each one carrying a long stick like a spear, sat down facing the bush where the path came over the mountains.

A long way off, right up in the far-away hills, there had been a pillar of grey smoke going up all the morning, which would at times change its colour to a dark black.

As the day grew, other columns of smoke showed up, each new one coming nearer and nearer, till at last a big fellow appeared on the edge of the hill where the path led down to the flat the town stood on.

My friends sitting round the chief appeared to take no notice of all this, but the green men advanced a little, keeping their eyes fixed upon the spot where the road opened out from the bush.

Presently from thence, with horrid yells and screeches, out jumped a black fellow from amongst the trees, flourishing a war club in one hand, and the green branch of a tree in the other.

For some time he danced, leapt, howled, and shouted, till he was quite done, and then our green chaps, with loud roars of war, made believe to fight and catch him, when they lugged him through the ring up to the chief.

Here, in front of the old man, the prisoner laid down the club and the branch, inviting him with signs to choose one of the two.

For a little time the chief didn't move, but looked straight at the things on the ground, and then, after speaking a few words to his

companions, he stretched out his hand and touched the branch.

This, I suppose, meant that peace was desired; but if he had chosen the other, war would have been the consequence.

Then the stranger, over whose head the green chaps had been holding their sticks, as if ready to knock it off, burst through them, with shouts and bounds, and disappeared into the bush he had just come from.

In about ten minutes the sound of many people singing was heard away deep in the forest, so prettily as, rising and falling, it came floating out from amongst the rustling leaves, gently shivering in the light warm breeze; and soon, against the dark hillside, was to be seen, through the trees, a long line of colour, mixed, and sparkling in the sun's rays, and flowing down the steep path towards us like a wonderful river of rainbows.

The wild song was soon quite near, and then out into the open came the visitors, all gay in their best dresses, one living mass of all the brightest and loveliest flowers and leaves they could find in the bush.

On they came, slowly and proudly, the little

girls leading, the big ones behind, and after them the men, the whole lot keeping up the singing at their very hardest.

When they had come quite close, they stopped and sat down, and the chief made a long speech, which ours answered, telling him, I suppose, how glad he was to see him, and then both the crowds mixed up together, shaking hands and kissing one another just like Christians.

As soon as the kissing was pretty well over, half a dozen of the loveliest young girls were told off to make kava for the chief, and were soon chewing away their very hardest, while all the rest of them scattered themselves in every direction visiting amongst the houses.

There, for the rest of the day, they did nothing but eat and drink; but when the moon rose bright and silvery from out the rippling water, and threw her soft light along the black mountain slope, glancing off the smooth green leaves of the breadfruit and bananas to explore and liven the darker corners of the bush, they all threw off their fine dresses, came out to the green almost as naked as they were born, and danced the whole night long.

When the day began to break, the fun stopped, and after a short sleep, the visitors disappeared, one by one, without even saying good-bye, and we were left to ourselves alone.

CHAPTER XI.

Another beach-comber.—"Wish they had eat you."—Charley Mafu's ground.—Paunchy Billy.—Bought, and off down the coast.—Charley Mafu's dinner-parties.—Punctuality.—Mafu's men.—Message from Thakambau.—Kicked overboard.—Nearly done for.—Another ruffian.—"I'm one of them judges."—A Fijian drinking orgie.—Letting themselves down.—White work in Levuka.—An oil swindle.—Gin, the trade lever.—Way to get a receipt.

ONE day, when I had been about four months with those cannibals, I noticed a great stir amongst them, and away they went in their canoes, chattering and jabbering in a great state of excitement.

In the afternoon they came back, and with them was a white man, whom they all appeared to know well.

He was exactly like all the other beach-combers that I had met—just as hairy, dirty, and ragged; half-native and half-white, but if anything a good deal more of the first than the last; and do you know that a lot of these chaps

were as big cannibals as the savages themselves, and would eat a man just for devilment, and because they knew it was wrong.

This same fellow told me afterwards that he did it for trade purposes, and not because he was hungry or liked it; but I didn't believe him, as he looked brutal enough to eat anything, and like it too.

It appeared that this awful-looking cove, stuck all round with pistols and knives, and carrying a double-barrelled gun on his shoulder, came twice a year to trade with the natives, exchanging with them their cocoanut oil for knives, axes, calico, and all sorts of such things.

When he caught sight of me, he sung out, "Hullo, darkie! How the deuce did you get here?" And when he saw that I couldn't walk without sticks, he said: "Oh! I see they are fond of you down here, but it must be for your cheerful company, and not for your good looks, for you are cursed ugly. What's come to the rest of your gang? Eat up, eh? I'm d——d glad they are, for I don't want any strangers knocking about, and I don't want you either, so out you must go somehow.

"I wish they had eaten you too, then there

would have been no bother; but it is, I suppose, that you black chaps taste nasty.

"Confound these niggers! they have already let off two fellows like you; and now the brutes are settled, and playing the very devil with my trade.

"I don't want any one in these parts who speaks English, and I won't have them, if I eat them out of the way myself.

"All this land belongs to Charley Mafu and your humble servant. We mean to do what we like with it, and won't have anybody here interfering with our rights. Savee?"

"I don't want to stop here," I said; "but how the devil am I to get away? These rascals have cut my feet all to pieces. I can't walk, and I have got no boat."

"Well," he answered, "I feel good-natured just now, so I don't mind taking you down the coast in mine, which is lying outside the bar, and I'll land you with the first white gang we meet down the coast. I don't like whites, and they don't like me. The white chaps here are too inquisitive about private affairs, and not long ago they gave me an invitation I couldn't accept. They wanted me badly to take the

principal part in a procession, but I was too shy and timid, so left the night before it came off; and, look here—if you ever reach the other end of the island alive, just you tell them there that 'Paunchy Billy' is your particular friend, and you'll meet with no end of attention. Where are you, do you say? Why, in Fiji. Didn't you know that? You can't have had much schoolin.' I finished my education in a very big school, where there were about three thousand of us, and plenty of masters; but you're bound to know all about that sort of thing if you live long enough, no doubt."

Two days after that talk, he bought me right out from the chief for some cloth and a knife or two, and I left the place with him in his boat—a half-decked whaler, carrying about five tons, and a half-caste native to help work her.

As we sailed down the coast in the beautiful bright blue lagoon, dotted all over with little islands, so green and fresh, the big hills on shore, covered with tall trees and lovely flowers, appeared to take a dive right into the water, and there, below, we could see them standing upside down, just as clearly as they were above.

Whilst travelling along so smoothly with nothing to do, I asked Paunchy Billy who the Charley Mafu was he talked about so much.

"Why! the best man in these islands," said he. "He ought to be, anyhow, for he has eaten more good men than any one else in the Pacific.

"He's not like that old fool Thakambau down the other end, who has got a lot of white scum to make laws and try to hang people who are free to do what they like.

"Thank goodness I'm the only white with Charley Mafu, and if I can help it, he doesn't have any more with him. One or two did try to come here, but somehow or other they met with serious accidents on the way up, and didn't arrive. Very strange, wasn't it?

"Charley don't properly belong here, but the place belongs to him, because he has killed nearly all the people out of it, and that's quite good enough title. He eat most of them.

"He came from Tonga, away over there to the west, with a lot of his men; soon put the fear of the Lord into these chaps; and if it wasn't for those mean whites and their guns,

he would quickly run old Thakambau out, eat him, and have the whole group to himself.

"Mafu's a very fine chap; never in a hurry about anything, and always makes his friends last as long as possible.

"When he goes out fighting and takes a town, he doesn't kill and eat all the people he finds. Oh, no! At first he only feeds off the ones killed in the fight, and there is always plenty of them.

"Mafu will have his fun, and doesn't really enjoy his meat without home-grown vegetables.

"To get them prime, he burns down the first house in the town, and then persuades the owners, perhaps with a club, to make a garden of the ground it stood upon, and plant it up with yams.

"When they are ripe, Mafu will call round to eat them, and always invites the family to dinner. And in all my experience they have never been late for the feast as they come up, wrapped in banana leaves all smoking hot, right straight from the oven.

"He then burns down the next house, and amuses himself just the same way; and, so as

not to create jealousy, he takes them one after the other, till he has gone through the whole town.

"Lately he has made so many engagements of that sort that he has been obliged to invite two lots at the same time, so as to get through his feasting fixtures during his lifetime.

"Charley Mafu is a very good friend to every one, but a d——d bad enemy. He only wants to do what he likes, that's all; and if the people are unreasonable, he kills them and eats them; but if they are wise, and give him what he wants, he lets them alone, just like those chaps you have come from."

For two days we sailed down the coast like this without anything particular happening, and passed plenty of pretty little towns, snugly cradled in the arms of the tall cocoanut trees, stretching out their great feathery leaves, shading the houses, and making them cool in the face of the hot, blazing sun.

Paunchy Billy went ashore at some of these places, but he didn't let me land with him, and made me stop on board ship.

On the middle of the third day we ran up a

nice-sized river, and brought to opposite a big native town, full of the most horrid-looking savages, all painted and yelling like demons; and didn't they look devilish!

As soon as they saw us, they jumped, shouted, danced, and tore up and down the beach like madmen, and Billy then said, "Those are Tongan chaps, and Mafu's somewhere about.

"I'm not going further than this, as my medical adviser says it is not healthy for me to get down that way any more; the climate very nearly killed me once before; besides which, I object to the bad company that loafs round that old fool Thakambau and his beastly court. I was obliged to expostulate with the asses long ago, and they didn't like it.

"That old idiot of a king has got the most intolerably mean lot of drunken rowdy whites for judges that ever was, and of all the thieves in the world, they are the worst.

"If you happen to come across them, give them Paunchy Billy's compliments, and they may all go to h—l; and if they want him for any government work, or any more processions, they have only to call on me and Mafu, right here, and we'll give them a warm reception,—in

the oven,—but we won't eat them—they are too dirty beasts for that.

"And tell their donkey of a master that Mafu has pretty nearly finished all the garden ground this side of the river, and means soon to go planting yams in Levuka, when he hopes to have the pleasure of his company to dinner. He'll know what that means, and perhaps brain you for telling him.

"And now jump overboard that side and swim ashore, and if you follow the exact line, you are sure to find some white men fooling about—that is, if the natives don't cook and eat you before you fetch them. They are awfully civil to strangers on both sides of this river, and generally take them inside out of the rain, for fear they might catch cold. Over you go now, quick, and don't come back; I've had quite enough of you."

He didn't wait for me to go myself, but kicked me right slap into the water anyhow, without even looking at me again; and that was the last I saw of the celebrated Paunchy Billy, who I soon found out was very much wanted in Levuka for hanging.

My feet were not at all well as I tramped

along that beach for the whole day long, but met no one, and when night came, I went a little way into the bush and camped, very hungry and tired, and what made me feel worse was that there were plenty of cocoanuts all round, but I couldn't climb for them.

I went to sleep at last, forgetting all about the grub, and on waking up the next morning, the first thing I saw was a big black savage, with a face painted hideously red and blue, sitting quietly at my feet, and on each side of him there were two more, just as still as though they were watching nothing at all, and didn't know I was there.

It was no use my trying to run, so I kept quite still, and pretended to go to sleep again; but it didn't answer, for they weren't going to wait any longer, so one fetched me a whack with a club, at the same time the other stuck about half an inch of his spear into me, which completely woke me up and brought me to my feet. They then tied my hands behind my back, and drove me along in front of them.

My poor feet were awfully sore, but when I stopped to rest them, they at once thumped me along, or stuck a spear into me to liven me up,

and so on, until I couldn't go any farther, sat down, and asked them to kill me.

I was so done that I didn't care what happened; but, by the Holy! the savages were just going to do what I had asked them, and in a minute I should have suffered my last and shortest headache, when a sort of white man hove in sight just in time to stop the club which was swinging over my head.

He was about the same looking sort of chap as Paunchy Billy—all hair and dirt, with gin marks all over his fiery face, and wearing scarcely any clothes.

His eyes were as red as his face, and so small that they appeared to stop at the back of his ugly head.

As he came up, after shouting something to the savages in their own lingo, he said to me: "And where in thunder do you come from? Who are you, and what do you want here?"

I told him that I was John King Bruce, a British subject; that I didn't want to come there at all, and positively couldn't tell him where I had come from, as I didn't know.

"That be blowed for a yarn," he said.

"It's true all the same," I answered, for I didn't

care what came now, I was that done; "and if you don't believe me, you can ask Paunchy Billy when next you see him. He's the fellow who sent me along here, with a kick overboard; and if you are one of those mean, drunken rowdies of judges, I was to tell you that, with his compliments, you can go to h—l. That's all I know; so just do what you like, but look sharp about it."

He looked at me for a moment, and then burst out laughing as he sneered: "So you saw old Paunchy, did you? and he sent us that polite message? I *am* one of those judges he speaks about so handsomely, and, please the pigs! I'll have the pleasure of hanging him yet. I nearly did so once, and the next chance I get, I swear I'll do it altogether. But jump up, and come along to the town; it's not far off; and if you stop here, those two chaps will soon smash your head. They are on the hunt for grub, and you'll do just as well as anybody else for them."

He then cut me loose, helped me up, and off we walked together, talking as we went about all I had been doing lately, where I had come from, and the last news of his friend Billy.

Presently we came to a native town, in the middle of which were two or three wooden houses belonging to white traders, and about a mile from shore, in the blue lagoon, rode a pretty little schooner at anchor, just arrived from Levuka, with new goods for the store-keeper of the place.

On shore, right in front of his shop, sitting all round a cask of spirits, with the head knocked out, and drinking it neat out of the pannikins, were the crew and a few friends, enjoying themselves immensely, all about as roaring drunk as they could be; and there those awful fellows sat for four days, hard at work at what they called "letting themselves down."

The real drunk is the consequence of the first day's work, when they take the stuff quite straight and raw, perhaps getting through about a quarter of it, when they *are* drunk, and no mistake, and they finish the night all round the cask.

On waking, the cask is filled up with water before beginning again, making strong grog, and to work they go once more.

It is still very strong, but they drink on until they can hold no more, then tumble down for

their second night's sleep; and so the game goes on.

Each time the grog is decreased, the cask is refilled with water, until at last they swear the stuff is no good at all, kick over the remainder, and go to work; but it never takes less than four days to do a Fiji "let down," and sometimes very much longer.

I stopped in that place till the schooner left for Levuka, when the skipper gave me a cast down.

There I found lots of white men, traders and loafers of every sort, all trying to cheat one another and do the natives, and they did it pretty well.

I soon got work on board a small boat that traded up and down the coast, buying oil from the natives and whites scattered about, and a nice lot of swindling we did too, but at last we got let in dreadfully.

We heard that a fellow about forty miles off had got a lot of oil to sell, and determined to try to get hold of it.

Times had been very bad—so bad that we had no money nor goods to pay for the stuff if we got it, and no one would lend us a halfpenny;

but, all the same, we meant to have that oil somehow.

All we had on board was a case of square gin, holding a dozen bottles, four of which we emptied, filled them up with water, put them back, and nailed the case up as if it had never been opened; then away we started for the chap's place, and anchored right in front of it, when he came quickly off to see us, and find out what we wanted.

When he got on board, my mate, who rejoiced in the name of "Liza,"—because he had no hair on his face and looked like a girl—sung out, "Hullo, 'Frenchy'! got any oil?"

"Yes, Liza, plenty of it. Do you want to buy?"

"Of course," said he, "that's just what I came for"; and seeing that Frenchy was about to ask some question, he followed up with, "but you must take dollars, for I've got no trade."

"All right," said Frenchy; "they'll do. I like them better than goods."

Liza then brought out the gin case, opened it right in front of us, took two bottles, and pulled the corks out of both; but one was water,

and that one we drank out of; our friend from the other.

By-and-by he began to get a little bit lively, and then Liza told him, "You go on shore now, Frenchy. Bruce and I are going to put the boat straight, and when we have finished, we shall come to look at your stuff; but here! you might just as well take a couple of these bottles with you; you can have the rest if you like, and we can charge it in the account."

"All right," said he, and off he went with a gin bottle under each arm.

Frenchy was an awful chap to drink when he could get it, but it took a tremendous lot to slue him, and that was what we were up to.

In about an hour, we went on shore, and found, as we hoped, our friend rather on the spree, and inclined to be more so.

Everything was going right for us, so after looking at the casks, all ready for taking away, agreeing upon the price to be paid, and making out the bill, we managed to get that fellow off his head enough to sign before getting the money, "just to save time, you know."

We had, of course, brought the rest of the gin on shore, and the way that fellow pitched into it

was surprising, while all the time we were drinking out of the watered bottles.

At last he tumbled down flat on the floor, quite done up; and then Liza wrote out another paper, which we left pinned to the door, saying how sorry we were that we couldn't wait till he got better, and that we had left the dollars in the far corner of the hut, which, of course, we hadn't.

We were sure that when he came to he would go and look for the coin, and, not finding it, would think that some of the natives had stolen it when he was bad; and if he came to Levuka, and kicked up a row with us, all we should have to do would be to produce the receipt we got out of him.

Anyway, we got all the casks on board in quick time, and were off on the land breeze for home, where, on arrival, we sold the oil to one of the merchants, and sacked the dollars.

CHAPTER XII.

Shady trading.—Oil gone up.—Arranging another swindle.—Same customer again.—Use of dark relations.—That cheat Mike.—Take the lot at the old figure.—Casks full to the bung.—"Let me know what you get for the stuff."—The biter bit.—That fraudulent Frenchy.—Another use for bamboo.—Commercially ruined.—Ship on board a whaler.—Training a loafer crew.—A curio manufactory.—Whale ground at Tonga.—"There she blows!"—Fixed to a fish.—Terrific travelling.—Perilous work.—Death of the whale.

Six months soon slipped past. Times were good then, and we made plenty of money one way and another—sometimes quite honestly, at others rather questionably; but no one got riled, for it was the custom of the place, and if you didn't do, more than likely you got done.

In that time Liza and me had scraped together a nice little pile of dollars, for we didn't carry on like the other chaps, and spend all in gin as soon as we made money, and we were on the look-out for a safe speculation.

One day we got the news that the price of oil

had gone up considerably in the Colonies; and thinking that perhaps the fellows down the coast didn't know of it, off we started to buy up all we could before the news got round.

Up to this time we had heard nothing about our old friend Frenchy. He hadn't come to Levuka to be nasty with us about our last deal, nor had he sent word; so we thought he had forgotten all about it; but in the end we found he hadn't, and got shamefully let in by him.

We heard that he had a lot of oil to sell some time before, so we went first to his place to begin business.

This time he didn't appear to be in a hurry either for news or trade, and stopped on shore; so we landed, and found him filling the last cask of a beautiful lot all ranged round his shed.

"By golly! said Liza; "what a nice lot you have got! Why, it's twice as much as you generally get in the time!"

"Yes," said Frenchy, very quietly, "it is a prime lot, and no error. A whole gang of my wife's relations have been down for the last few months to give me a hand with the nuts. D—mn them. They ought to do something

for me, when they stole all those dollars you gave me for that last deal."

"Did they now?" said my chum. "That's too bad. Why don't you shoot a few of the thieves?"

"Can't, old man," was the answer. "There are too many of them round about for that sort of thing; besides that, they buy my stores, and are useful every now and then, as you see by that oil. I've been very lucky this time, and no mistake. I never had such a nice lot before."

"There's the last one" said he, punching in the bung; "and in a couple of days 'Mike' will be round with his schooner to take it." And suddenly breaking off in his conversation, he remarked, "But I forgot to ask you how oil was when you left. I should like to know, as I don't want that fellow Mike to cheat me."

Liza was quite ready for the question, and said at once, "Gone down a good bit; but I think it will come up again in time."

"That's a pity! I suppose I shan't get more than the gone-down price?"

"No," answered Liza. "That man is the closest man I know of. I'm certain he'll cut you down as low as he can. Pity he knows it's cheaper, isn't it?"

"Well," said Frenchy, looking so very innocent, as if he wasn't selling us the whole time, "then I think I'll keep the stuff till the price goes up again, as you say it will."

"Now look here," said Liza, "you were very unfortunate over that last deal, so I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll take the lot, if you will part, at the old figure, and chance the rise. You're a good sort of fellow, and we don't want to drive any hard bargains with friends."

"Done with you," said he. "Post the dollars, and the oil is yours; but first, you might as well take a look round it to see all right. I'm very glad you have taken it, as Mike is such an awful scoundrel. Would you believe it, he did me very badly once—made me drunk, stole the stuff, and never even left a bit of paper behind him,—like you did,—to say anything about the deal. I think I got square with him afterwards, when my natives burnt his store. I always do manage somehow to run level with chaps who cheat me."

I thought those remarks rather pointed, but said nothing, and I must confess that I was rather grieved that they fitted us quite as comfortably as they did that fraud Mike; but he

said these awkward things so calmly that I didn't imagine he was playing with us—yet just wasn't he having a game!

We went round inspecting all the casks one after the other, knocked the bungs out of each of them, and found them all full to the brim with good oil.

As soon as the deal was finished and the dollars paid, the casks were put on board our boat; but before we left, Frenchy said: "Very sorry I can't offer you anything to drink before you leave. There is only one bottle left up there on the shelf, and I must keep him for medicine, in case I get sick. It was very kind of you to leave the rest of that case you brought. Soon I shall be in Levuka, and then it will be my turn to shout for the crowd. Good-bye, old fellow! Come again. I shall soon have another lot of things ready, for I mean to make those relations of mine work for the dollars they stole. You must come along and buy the oil. I do like dealing with honest, ready-money chaps like you; and mind you let me know what you get for the stuff up there. You can send me word by some of the boats, if you can't come yourself. I shall be very anxious

until I know, and then I shall be able to pull the leg of that chap Mike. He is always about here trying to do me. Now, good-bye; and as much luck to you as you deserve!"

I didn't like his talk at all; he appeared to be sneering at us all the time, and I thought I saw him laugh as he turned off up the beach.

I told Liza I was sure that something was up; but he was so pleased over the deal, and glad that the news of oil going up had not got down before us, that he wouldn't listen to anything.

In Levuka, before the oil is put into the ship's casks to take away, it is poured out of the small trade ones into a big iron tank, and this we proceeded to do as soon as we got back.

When we knocked the bung out of the first cask, the oil poured out beautifully, but stopped running almost immediately.

"Blow the thing. What's the matter?" sung out Liza, holding on to the barrel to keep it on top of the tank. "Something is stopping up the bung-hole. Poke a stick in it, Bruce."

I got one and shoved it in, and then said, "Why, the thing's empty!"

"Empty, you fool," said he. "How can it

be empty when it's so heavy I can scarcely hold it up. Lead is nothing to it for weight."

"I don't care," said I; "there isn't any more oil to come out of that bung-hole. The stick has gone right through to the bottom, and come out quite dry."

"Oh, that cursed Frenchy! I do believe he's done us," cried my chum, thinking now of my suspicions. "Help me down with the thing, and bring a gimlet here, and we'll soon find out what's the matter."

Then we bored a hole in the end of the cask, and what do you think came out? Not oil, but salt water!

That fraud Frenchy was a cooper, and always made his own casks, and this lot he had specially arranged for getting square with us by fitting a length of bamboo tightly across the cask from the bung-hole to the other side.

This, holding about a gallon, he filled up with oil, and the rest of the very scandalous thing with sea water!

We were done properly, and no mistake. Couldn't have been worse done, for all our dollars were in that shameless deal.

That blackguard swindler got so square

with us that time that we had to sell the boat, and there I was loose on the beach again, with no money and nothing to do; so I shipped on board a whaler that was in want of hands.

My new ship hailed from New Zealand, had been out nigh two years, and this was her last fishing before she went home to refit; and from the look of her, she wanted it badly.

Everything on board, ropes and all, seemed to have been so often mended and smashed about that it was a wonder the masts stood up at all, and the sails were so rotten, holey, and black, that they scarcely hung together. Even the skipper looked very much the worse for wear; but whatever was worn out, his temper wasn't.

If I hadn't badly wanted to get away to some respectable white place I shouldn't have engaged on board that floating coffin.

Whalers, you must know, when they want men, take anybody they can get, whether they know anything about ships or not; and before they go out to fish, they go to some quiet place where the new men can't run away, to train them to rowing the boats; and a particular rough time the poor devils have of it.

With me joined the biggest lot of loafers out—all chaps who had run away from Australia for one thing or another, but never let on what for.

These chaps had loafed about amongst the natives, and sponged upon them so long that at last they had worn out their welcome, and been kicked out.

A lot of them said they were gentlemen ; but to look at them as they then were no one would have thought so.

Anyhow, we had about twenty or thirty of these duffers, and as soon as we got them on board, to stop them changing their minds, we put to sea and anchored about six miles off, close under the lee of the reef; and then began the game.

The boats were put in the water, and manned with a crew of these duffers—an old hand in the bows, and a mate in the stern, to look after them.

Before they got into the boats, the mates let their men see plainly that they put a pistol into their pockets, by way of a hint for the crews not to try fighting, for some of them were first-class rowdies.

It was a cruel sight to see the mates work those poor devils. They were out morning, noon, and night, working as hard as they could go; and if they tried to shirk rowing, the chap in the bows or stern would fetch them a crack with the boat-stretcher, or heave the nearest handy thing right at them.

For the first few days those poor beggars were bad, with their backs broken in two, and their hands covered all over with blood blisters; and not much rocking was wanted to put them to sleep when the day's work was over.

In about a fortnight they were licked into some sort of shape, when we passed through the reef and set off on our voyage to the Friendly Group, where we expected to meet with the whales, who every year went down there with their calves.

A whaler, you must know, doesn't want to travel fast; so long as she can go at all, that is all that is wanted, and lucky for us it was so, as we couldn't go more than four miles an hour in a gale, and then it would have to be behind us.

Of course, with so many hands on board, there was precious little to do but loaf round the deck, sleep, and eat; as for drinking, we

got nothing but water. We sailed on teetotal principles; but that was more than the skipper did; and of him we saw very little, but when we did, and he was to windward, the stink of rum was powerful strong.

He only came out of his bunk about twice a day, to curse us all round, and to show us that he was alive and not at all drunk; at least, he thought he did so, but he tacked about in a very strange way for a sober man.

His swearing was quite refreshing to me after all the stale stuff I had been listening to for the last year. It was something of a very much higher class, and the style quite new to me. The other chaps didn't like it so much, though; but they had been in the Colonies, and were used to that kind of language.

All the old hands settled down to something or other: some knitted stockings, some made nets; others did crochet, just like girls; in fact, all did some sort of work.

The boatswain and carpenter produced long, thick sticks of wood, which they cut into clubs—some so big that no one man could ever use them.

These they painted red, blue, and all sorts

of colours, hung them with feathers, and then rammed them down the galley chimney, to make them look old; and when they got back to port, they sold these things to museums and collectors for native island weapons.

This was the sort of life we led until we came to Tongatabu, and anchored about ten miles off, amongst a lot of coral patches, when the misery of the duffers began again, and all the whaling tools were got out, ready for use at any time the fish might come along.

One morning, the look-out at the mast-head sung out, "There she blows! there she blows!" and at once three boats were cleared away for the hunt.

Away, about two miles off, we saw a lot of fountains spouting into the air, which showed that a school of whales was passing by, and we were soon off to try for them.

When we got near, everything was made ready and looked over, the line was seen coiled neatly in the tubs, so that it might run easy, the leading hand stood up in the boat with harpoon all prepared for fastening on, and the mate saw the lance handy, for killing the fish at the end of the hunt.

Presently the mate sung out, "Easy all! There she lays, right ahead. Stand by there in the bows, to fix on."

I looked round, and there she was really, rolling about like an enormous great tub, so oily and shining in the sun, and amusing herself throwing up the water in fountains of snow-white spray, with a loud, snorting row.

Slowly we crept up without noise, and just as our bowman was about to heave the harpoon and fix on, the brute up with her tail and slipped down out of sight, so smoothly that she didn't leave the smallest curl on the top of the water.

"Never mind," shouted the mate; "she'll come up again farther on, so pull a sharp stroke or two."

We went on smartly for about five minutes, when up the fish came again, close alongside of us, and before you could have said "Jack Robinson" the harpoon was stuck deep into its back, and the line flying out of the tub over the bows in sheets of fire as it ran through the reel, over which a man kept pouring water, to put out the burning till it travelled comfortably.

Although the line was running out like mad,

the boat didn't move at all, for the whale, when struck, "sounded"—that is, dived straight down below.

"D—mn the brute!" said the harpooner; "there's one tub of line out, and here goes another. I wonder when that cuss means to come up again?"

At last the line slackened, and we knew that he was coming up; and as the slack got handy, it was carefully taken in and coiled up for another run.

We were all the time quite ready for a start, sitting down on the bottom of the boat, our oars fastened, with their blades high in the air, to prevent them catching the water when the fun began.

By-and-by the line tautened, when the bowman made it fast, and at that very moment up came the monster, about fifty yards ahead, rolling like a ship in a storm, throwing up great spouts of water with an awful row, and bringing his enormous tail with a smack like a cannon down on the waves, he drove them into sheets of foam, and then started off as hard as he could, with such a jerk as nearly dragged the boat under the heavy swell.

"Slack off handsomely," shouted the mate, "till we get way on, or the line will break. There, that will do; make fast." And as we rushed through the water swifter than ever I thought a boat could go, the man forrard stood by with a tomahawk, to cut the line if anything went wrong, whilst the mate, with his long steer oar out over the stern, put us whichever way the whale chose to go.

By golly! how he did pull us over the big swells; we went at such a rate that the water flying off the bows was cut into great big green walls, as smooth as glass, looking just as solid, and so clear that we could see right through them, to the light beyond,—and they stood quite ten feet above us,—so that we could see nothing of the top of the water.

There we were, right down in the bottom of that watery cutting, sitting as still as if we were made of stone, and the only one who moved at all was the mate, who had to straighten her up every now and then with a stroke or two of the steer oar.

It was awfully grand to fly through the water like that, and throw back the big swells as though they were nothing.

It made me feel that I must go mad again with excitement, and I wanted to shout and dance, but the mate soon stopped that with a look.

We rushed along like this in the deep, clear cut, the water splitting before us as we touched it with our sharp bows with great ease, as we followed the harpoon line, standing straight out before us as rigid as an iron bar, while the whale, without jerking or twisting, dragged us, with an honest, steady strain, right after him.

It was wonderfully confusing to look over the side: the boat appeared to be standing still, as though fixed, while the walls of crystal green water seemed to be rushing past at a headlong pace; and yet there was no hurry to be noticed,—the sides of the cut were so smooth and clear.

In about half an hour the pace began to slack, getting slower and slower every moment, and as it lessened, so the walls of water on each side of us came lower and lower, filling up the valley we had been travelling in, as we were floated upwards, till at last we found ourselves quite still, riding over the tops

of the rolling swells on the surface once more.

There we waited, watching for some time, when up came our friend, spouting in a very troubled manner, and lay rolling about on the top of the water, looking as if he had had quite enough of playing at towing boats.

"Now we have him," said the mate. "Out with the oars, two of you, and pass me the lance.

"You, Jim, there, forrard, take in the slack of the line as we go up, and don't pull on it for the life of you, or you'll start him again. That's it, boys! Handsomely now!"

We pulled up very slowly, and were quite close already for the mate to lance him, when he shouted, "Look out! By the Lord he's off straight back again. Sharp, now! Peak your oars and sit down tight on the bottom. Feel him, Jim, with your line, and then slack off gently till you get way on the boat, or, by the Holy! he'll pull the nose out of us with the jerk."

He then set to work with the steer oar, and pulled the boat right round, bows towards where the fish had gone.

In a moment we were off again, first of all slowly, as Jim slacked off, then at last full pace, as he made all fast, and once more the procession began.

It didn't last long this time, as the whale was evidently getting the worse for wear, and started in dodging about from side to side, chucking and jerking us all over the place in a most annoying manner.

Once or twice I thought he would have torn the side of the boat out as he suddenly turned off in a new direction, and two or three times he threw us into the walls of water, high on each side, rather too deep to be comfortable; but each time he dodged the mate put the bows straight to him, and we came through all right.

Presently he stopped his games, came to the top, and lay there snorting and spouting in a helpless manner, with not another kick in him.

Then, pulling up close alongside, the mate drove the long, sharp lance deep into his side, right through the heart, and spouting blood, with a last lash out of his tail, he lay dead on the top of the water.

We then made fast, towed him to the ship, and the next day all that was left of that fish of any good was in casks in the hold.

CHAPTER XIII.

Friendly sharks.—Yankee President, Holy Joe, and John King Bruce.—Off after spouts.—Wilful baby whale.—Fool of a harpooner.—Fish mother's rage.—Boat and crew skied.—Settling accounts with her tail.—Long swim on a plank.—A mad mother.—Promoted mate.—Ashore for yams.—A swaggering lot.—In hot water again.—White or native?—A fighting beach-comber.

WHILE we were cutting out the fish, the sharks —some of them of enormous size—crowded round, just like chickens in a farmyard coming for their barley. They were as tame as cats, as they lay, with their ugly noses resting on the whale, so close that we could touch them with our spades.

They were so friendly that when a man slipped off into the water, right in the middle of them, they didn't attempt to bite him at all, but went out of his way, till he scrambled back again.

At last we got to know them so well that the boys gave them all sorts of queer names: all

the twelve apostles were there, and well distinguished; the Yankee President—he was striped; "Union Jack," "Holy Joe," and such-like; but one ugly black fellow was christened John King Bruce, and I didn't like that joke.

Here we stopped for a long time without changing ground; sometimes catching two or three fish a day, at other times going for a week or ten days without seeing one.

The skipper went on shore every now and then, but when he did, he only took the old hands with him, as he was afraid to trust us, lest we should think the new place good enough to loaf in and desert; and I don't say he wasn't right.

One day spouts were reported, the boats were lowered and off after them, and soon got spread out in different parts of the school.

My boat went in chase of a fish that appeared to keep away from the crowd, as though there was something the matter with it, while all the rest were sporting as they moved along, spouting and playing as if they were quite safe from harm.

Our whale travelled ahead very slowly, but

every now and then turned round, and cruised about in the direction it came from.

This seemed rather curious, but when we got close, we saw the cause, and found it was a big lady whale, trying to make her obstreperous youngster of a calf go in the right direction; but each time she tried to lead the cantankerous little beggar, he would turn and go off in exactly the wrong road.

Then the old lady would return, swim round him until she had put his head straight, give him a few punches with her tail, and take the lead again.

As soon as she saw us coming her anxiety increased, and she swam round and round that calf quicker and quicker, trying hard to lead him away, but with no result, till at last he turned right round and came straight into us.

"Leave him alone!" shouted the mate. "Leave him alone! There'll be the very devil to pay, and no pitch hot, if you touch him."

However, it was too late; the harpooner in the bows couldn't resist the temptation of having a shy, and as the wilful child passed close underneath, he drove the iron right into

him, with such force that he spouted blood at once and turned up dead.

"You've done it now, you cuss!" roared the mate. "Look out boys! here she comes!"

And, my word! she did come too, at the rate of about a thousand miles a minute, tearing and sending the water flying up all round her, and in the smallest possible space of time up went boat, crew, and all, slap into the air, with the awful heave she gave us from underneath.

Down we came again, splashing into the water. But that wasn't enough for the mother, for she was there to make our further acquaintance; and, standing on her head, with her big tail lifted high out of the water, she let us have two such tremendous smashes that the remains of the boat were broken into small pieces.

I don't know whether in all this mess I went up again or not—for water, bits of boat, and men, were flying round so thick that I didn't know what I was doing or where I was, and close by was that vicious old whale, cruising about slapping the water, and driving it in thick sheets of foam right over us, with the most awful thundering noise.

She was downright mad over that stupid

calf; and to be in the water close to a crazy whale is no joke, I can assure you, and a thing I don't want to experience again, for I never was nearer dead than then, not even when I was given up the other day.

It was very lucky for us that all her splashings and the heave of the swells had sent us away from where the dead calf was floating, as she looked after him and let our bits alone.

When my confusion was over, I found myself floating on a bit of the boat's stern, with no one alive but that fool of a man who had made all the mischief.

In the water, scattered all round, were the other poor chaps, smashed and shivered in every limb, and with heads horribly broken, swimming dead, and there were only me and that harpoon idiot alive to tell the tale. One by one the poor devils sank down out of sight, till we were left all alone, riding up and down on the smooth, swelling, lumpy sea, with a mad monster of a whale not very far off, quite ready to do more mischief if she had not been occupied with her calf.

The other boats were so long coming that I began to think we should never get home

again, but in about three hours, just as we had had quite enough of it, they arrived, each towing a fish behind them, which had made them so long getting back.

As they passed, they picked us up; the whale had taken care that there was nothing else worth moving; and soon we got on board.

The skipper was in a great rage when he heard of the loss of the boat and six men, but I think he was more riled at losing the mate, who always had done the navigation for him.

Nearly all that night he went raging and cursing round the ship, till he couldn't carry all the rum that he had kept on swallowing, and then he went to his bunk.

The next day he promoted the two other mates, and made me his third; so there I was a ship's officer again!

I didn't want to be mate at all; I only wanted to get to some white place; but then, as I saw that the skipper let the mates go on shore with the boats now and then, I thought I might just as well take the place, and see what the country was like; but I don't think the men liked it at all, because I was not their colour.

In a day or two, just as I wanted, the skipper

sent me on shore for yams and fresh vegetables; so off I started, with a crew of old hands, and, after about two hours' row, got to the landing-place.

The country I found here was very unlike the other islands I'd been in, for it was nearly flat, with only one little hill, about thirty feet high, to be seen near the beach.

However, I saw more white men there than I did in Levuka, but exactly the same sort of chaps, most of them more than half native, and the whole lot with dark wives.

The back of the beach was crowded with houses, the same sort as in Fiji; but the men were quite different,—they were lighter in colour, and swaggered about so frightfully proud of themselves they would scarcely speak to a fellow.

The first thing I did was to get the yams on board the boat, and then, thinking I would take a small look round, I told the men to wait a little, as I had something else to get, and off I went round the beach.

I met a great many of the savages, with their faces painted all colours, stalking proudly about, looking very busy over something, and flourish-

ing their clubs and spears, as they shouted and talked quite lively.

A more insolent lot there couldn't have been: they not only never made room for me on the path, but went out of their way to have the pleasure of shoving me off it; and I daren't say anything to them, for fear of a lick across the head with something heavy and hard.

The whole lot were in a great state of excitement, and getting ready for some sort of devilment or other.

Presently the crowd became thicker, and I was pushed about from one stinking big fellow to another, till I was almost as greasy as any of them, but all finished when a thundering savage gave me such a rough heave that he sent me spinning right off the road, with a bang, against the wall of a wooden-built house.

While I stood there, confused and thinking what I was to do to get out of the row, some one inside called out, "You'd better come in, 'snowball.' You'll get a clubbing if you stop long out there."

Very thankfully I went in; and there I found the most complete beach-comber I ever saw.

He was naked to the waist, like the natives,

and, like them, shining all over with cocoanut oil; his only dress was a piece of cloth round his waist, and from there down to his knees he was tattooed, which showed up remarkably in bright blue against his light-coloured skin.

On his head he wore an enormous mop of hair, tied up with wreaths of flowers and leaves.

A long smash across his quite flat nose didn't make his face any prettier than did the beastly paint that was stuck all over it; and his red eyes, without whites, one of them squinting in the corner, stuck fast to his wreck of a nose, altogether made up as nasty a picture of a white man as could be seen.

As I entered, he said: "You must be a fool to go wandering about amongst those chaps. Why, they would just as soon kill and eat you as look at you. I'm surprised you got as far as this without having your head cracked."

I answered, "What's the matter? I've done no harm. Why should they kill me?"

"For fun," said he. "We are all just back from a fight on the other side; and, by golly! there's no more enemy left in those parts. We eat them all—men, women, children, crops, and everything.

"All but the chief, whom we have brought back to have a quiet talk to old Tubou Malahoi, the king; and he'll do something nasty to him, I know, because he has said lots of insulting things about him, and tried to boss the country himself.

"Would you like to come along and see the show? I must be there, for I am a big chief amongst these people, and no one will harm you with me."

CHAPTER XIV.

A beach-comber's state toilet.—Way for the big fighter.——A savage parliament.—Tubou Malahoi, King of Tonga.—Prisoner makes a remark.—Awful result.—Horrible cure for free speech.—Living man's tongue swallowed.—Appalling murder.—Kava and blood.—Hunted by cannibals.—More killing.—Tied up for a deserter.—Devilish ill-treatment.—Sail for Samoa.—Landed sick.—Message for whites.—Finis.

THE invitation to see "something nasty" I couldn't resist, though my short experience of these devils was not nice or assuring, so I said I'd go.

"All serene; come along. That crowd you met in the road were going to the meeting of those two loving friends—the king and the rebel."

He then called out for one of his wives,—there were about a dozen knocking round about the house,—and she came to rub him down with a lot more oil, this time all sticky and yellow with saffron, as I think it is called.

Another girl brought his gun, his fighting

axe, and his long knife, until at last he was all ready, and a real picture of battle, murder, and sudden death he looked.

The savages all this time were streaming away in the same direction, and as they came near us, they cleared the road, and gave us all the path to ourselves.

There was no hustling this journey; oh, no! The haughty warriors appeared afraid to look at us, as my new friend, with his head in the air, his feathers and wreaths streaming out behind him, gun on his shoulder, and a big axe slung on his back, strode down the beach, just as if the whole place belonged to him.

What with one thing and another, I quite forgot all about the boat, yams, and everything else, and followed on in great excitement, to see what was going to happen.

Presently we turned off from the sea, and passing through a narrow belt of bush, came to a large open space, shaded all round the edges with a lovely fringe of cocoanut and breadfruit trees, and with a big house standing at one end of it.

All round, sitting in the shade, were hundreds and hundreds of painted and oiled devils of

Tongans, with their spears and clubs laid on the grass in front of them. They were actually blazing with the colours of beautiful flowers and bright berries they wore in garlands round their heads, necks, and bodies.

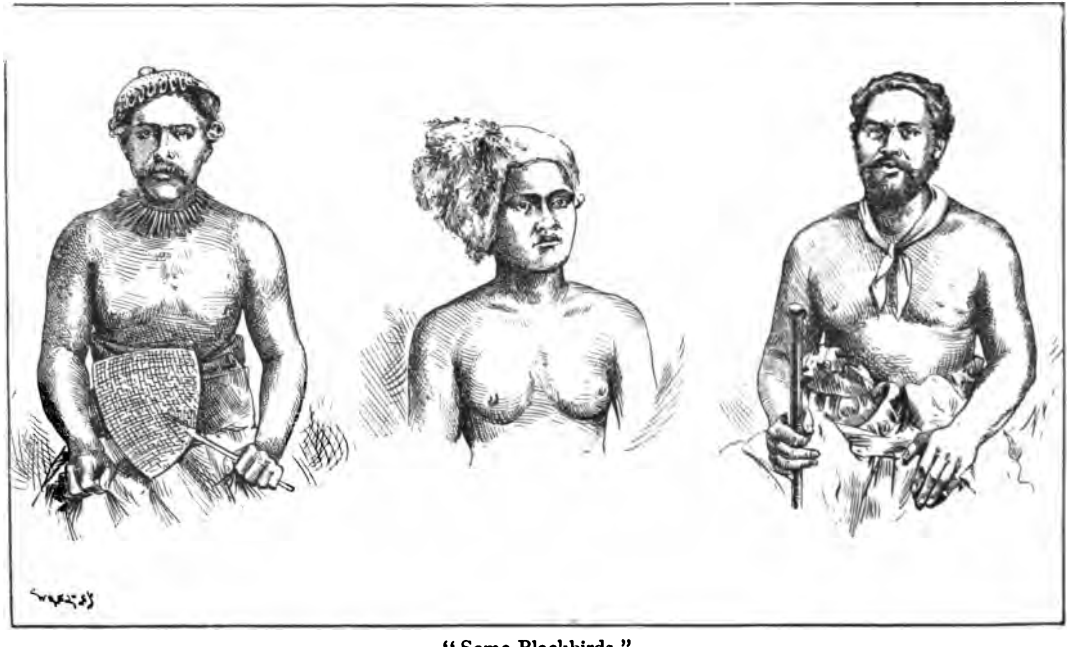
In front of the big house, standing leaning on a spear, still as a stone statue, was the finest man that ever I saw, before or after.

He was "Tubou Malahoi," King of Tonga, the first fighter in the whole Pacific, and cousin to that cannibal wretch Mafu, in Fiji.

He appeared to have come there strictly for business, for he wore nothing at all but his waistcloth, with not a sign of a flower, and his face was grinning with such a devilish look of scorn that it made me shiver with horror to look at it.

His big black eyes were flashing out from under his scowling brows with quiet rage, that seemed as if about to break out into something dreadful at any moment, as he kept them fixed on a man, tied up hands and feet, in the middle of the square, right in the full force of the blazing sun.

He was the rebel chief the fighters had brought back for the king to talk to.



"Some Blackbirds."

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Just before we came to the meeting-place my new friend gave me his axe to carry, saying, "The people will then know that you belong to me, but mind you stick close, and do not move from right behind me when I sit down, for there are a lot of young warriors here who haven't been fighting, and who would knock the head off a stranger just for a lark."

When we got to the crowd, they quickly opened out, and let us through right up to the king, where, without a word, we squatted down alongside of two very old men, who had come with us.

For a long time there was deep silence, but I could plainly see that the rage of the king was tearing him to pieces, and as he looked so revengefully and cruelly at the victim before him, he fairly shook with wicked frenzy, and ground his teeth together so hard as to be heard a long way off.

No devil in hell could have looked more spiteful than that chap; the perspiration was pouring off him like water, till he could stand the excitement no longer.

With a hideous screeching yell, he jumped straight out some distance to the front, when,

throwing away his spear and working his arms about like a windmill, he began to talk to the warriors, who then were almost as excited as he.

The more he spoke the wilder he got; his eyes flashed sparks of fire, and rolling fearfully, all bloodshot with rage, they stood right out of his head, which, with a face fit for the worst demon, made him a thing too terrible to look at.

As he jumped and threw himself about in his fearful rage, his people all round started up and took up the yelling and dancing, but, above all the frightful riot, the fearful voice of the king was to be heard, as foaming at the mouth he convulsed himself more furiously than ever, till presently he got so bad that he fell down in a fit quite exhausted.

As soon as that happened all became quiet again, so quiet that you might have heard a pin drop, when the man tied up in the middle took advantage of the silence and shouted out loud something or other.

It must have been something very insolent, for he had no sooner got the words out of his mouth than up jumped the king, seized his

spear, and with a vengeful yell, rushed at him.

As he stood over him, with the spear raised all ready to run through the helpless victim, the latter shouted aloud something more, when the king, howling like twenty thousand demons, threw away his spear once more, fairly jumped upon the poor devil's breast, stooped down, and dragging his mouth wide open, tore his quivering tongue right out by the roots from his broken jaws, and swallowed it before his eyes.

He then walked back, and sat down quietly alongside of us, as if he had done nothing at all out of the common.

As soon as the king had turned from his tortured enemy, the whole crowd rushed in upon him, and then we heard the sickening thuds of club strokes on human flesh, a sound that made my whole body creep with horror.

Every one of those hundreds of savages hit him as he got the chance; and when they cleared off back to their places round the square, they left nothing in the shape of a man to be seen,—nothing but a bleeding heap of

flesh and bones, battered and broken to little bits and torn to shreds.

After the murder was over, the whole meeting became calm, and appeared to be talking prettily to one another, as they laughed and made speeches in the easiest possible manner, and soon some girls were sent for to chew kava for the chiefs.

They came into the square looking as bright, beautiful, and merry as they well could, and gay with fine dresses, and garlands of the most glorious coloured flowers crowning their jet-black hair, and their lovely young faces smiled on every one present.

They didn't take the slightest notice of the ghastly heap of flesh out on the grass, all steaming and drying in the sun, but sat down close to it, and began their work.

When sufficient had been chewed, the mess was put into the big bowl, mixed with water, strained in the same graceful way Samoan girls do it here, and handed round in cocoanut-shell cups.

Soon after this the meeting began to break up, as one by one, or in small mobs, these ruffians moved off to their houses to sleep, and

perhaps think over all the good things they had been doing lately; till at last there was only the king, those two old men, and my beach-comber left to look at that horribly mangled heap of what had been a living creature but a short time before.

All this time the sights I was witnessing had driven every recollection of the boat from my mind. These, however, now returned; so I said good-bye to my friend, and started off at a run to the water, but found nothing of the boat or the ship, except the three masts of her a long way off on the sky-line.

I suppose they had got tired of waiting for me so long, and had gone off to tell the skipper that I'd deserted.

This was a real pretty business! I didn't want to stop along with such fellows as I had just left; they were too haughty and quarrelsome for me.

I then sat down on a rock, to think for a bit what I should be up to, and while doing so three savage looking rascals came down with a basket full of what was left of that poor devil they clubbed up on the square.

With mocking gestures and laughs, they

threw the basket into the sea, and then, instead of going away, stopped looking at me precious hard and as wicked as they could be.

I got afraid, and moved away in the direction of the beach-comber's house, the only place of safety I knew.

The brutes immediately followed, and when I saw that, I set off running as hard as I could, they after me, shouting like mad.

I'm quite sure that I never ran faster in my life, and no wonder, as it was for that I ran; but all this yelling brought out more savages by the dozen from the houses, who joined in the hunt, till there were quite fifty of these tattooed devils all chasing me to get first crack at my poor head.

Some of the natives came out in front, and as I rushed past in my flight, they made hits at me, but I jumped so smartly from one side to the other, dodging the clubs as they tried to brain me, that I was not touched, until a girl threw a big stone, which caught me across the stomach, knocked all the wind out of me, and brought me down without a breath.

With hideous screeches of victory, those demons then raced all the faster, to get up first

and settle me; and once more in my life I gave myself up for lost.

I thought then all would have been over in a few moments; but how long they seemed I shall never, never forget, as I laid on my face, expecting the crash that would have sent me off to the kingdom to come.

It was so long coming that I sat up and looked round, and saw that once more I was saved, for there was my new friend the beach-comber swinging a big club, standing between me and the men who were thirsting for my blood.

There he stood talking to them in their own lingo, and they were hard at work shouting back to him in a very angry and insolent manner.

At last he said something that they couldn't stand anyhow, and two of the mob rushed out to fight him.

With a jump or two, he met them more than half-way, and before you could say "knife," one of them was dead, with his head burst open, and the other was on the ground, doubled up as if he had the cholera, from a heavy club stroke in the stomach.

The rest didn't like to come on; and as by this time one of his wives had brought him a gun, the howling gang thought it best to go home, and not quarrel any more with the "papalagi alii fita-fita," as they say; or, in English, the "white chief warrior."

When they were gone, my beach-comber said, "You've had a narrow squeak for it this time, darkie. If I hadn't just got home, you would have been amongst the coloured angels by this time, and your handsome carcass in the oven. But how the deuce did you get amongst that lot? They are the worse gang in the town—all low men, who have to do the dirty work. I thought you were off to your ship."

I then told him all about the boat, and how those fellows came to hunt me; when he continued: "Well! I suppose you must come into the house for to-night, but to-morrow you must get somewhere out of this. After this fight, they will have you as sure as fate if you stop.

"I've just killed their best man, and given another something to remind him of me for some time to come; but I can't keep on killing and thumping my own men for you, so take my

advice and leave this to-morrow; anyway, you don't stop in my shanty."

I went to sleep very sorrowfully that night, not having any idea of where to go, or what to do, after I got kicked out in the morning: it looked a dead certainty for a killing at last.

At daylight I was woke up by a solid kick in the ribs, and the gruff voice of my protector telling me to get up at once.

"What for?" said I, half asleep.

"Because I tell you," he answered angrily. "And what's more, you had better look sharp. Do you know what you are? I'll tell you! You're a cursed deserter from that whaler out there. I've just caught you running away to the bush, and your skipper has given me ten dollars—look at them! there they are, all right and bright—to put you safely in the boat he sent for you this morning.

"You may bet I'm going to do it for sure; so get up, you black skunk, while I tie you, or perhaps you'll escape, and kill more of my poor men, like you did yesterday."

Without any more talk, he made me fast, and kicked me out in front of him to the beach, where the boat was lying, in charge of the mate.

It was no use my telling them that I wanted to go on board very badly, and save my life out of that murderous place; they wouldn't believe me; but, just as though I was a dangerous criminal, they threw me down on the bottom of the boat, and tied me fast to the thwarts.

When we reached the ship, they dragged me up the side, and as I went over the bulwarks, tied as I was, the skipper, who had been taking something stronger than tea for breakfast, rushed up, and with his shut fist struck me down flat.

"Take the black nigger," said he, "and tie him up forrard. I'll teach him to run away! This is what comes of taking loafers off the beach out of charity, and, by the Holy! I'll have satisfaction out of their hides."

I was then dragged off to the bows, and lashed up to the heel of the bowsprit, while that respectable skipper went off for some more breakfast.

That meal of his lasted more than half the day; and each time he tackled his provisions he came forrard to curse and kick me, and then would stagger back for more, feeling thirsty through the exercise he gave me, I suppose.

This sort of thing went on for two days and

two nights, till I could stand it no longer, and what with the sun, no grub, and the hidings, I was going off my head, when the men took things in their own hands, and cut me loose.

They had to fight the skipper though—who, it appears, was mad to kill me—before they could do it; and he was so bad that they locked him up aft, till his boiling rage had cooled off a bit.

The ship was now upside down: there was no work done, and although great schools of whales were passing daily, no one went for them; nothing was done but eating, drinking, and loafing round the decks.

The mates and the crew behaved very well, for all they wanted was to get to New Zealand.

No one but the drunken old skipper wanted to stop in Tonga, where the principal sport of the natives was hunting and eating strangers, and the noble savage only made friends and liked them when he had them comfortably inside.

No! every man Jack wanted to get away from such a cursed country, where, if you talked a little too much, some gentleman would swallow your tongue for you.

In time the skipper got more reasonable, and one day he hoisted his anchor, and away we went in a northerly direction, to call at another group of islands before turning south for New Zealand.

In about a week we found ourselves anchored in the bay of Apia, just out there, with canoes full of these laughing, good-natured natives all round.

I didn't see them though for more than an hour or so, for I was so sick with cruel treatment and bad grub that I tumbled into my berth, thinking I must die.

All on board thought so too, and as I was a great bother to them, they put me ashore before they sailed, and here I've been ever since; up one day, and down the next; but, on the whole, quite happy and contented.

All along since I've been in the island I have only had one trouble, and that was with my wife's relations, who, when they knew I had a little money, would make her mutiny till they got it out of me. No dollars, all right! Lots of dollars, all wrong!

And now, sir, that I've finished my story I hope that you will not think worse of me.

I never was really bad, for it was only when I was mad that those awful things happened; and the recollection of the terrible manner in which the brutes I met treated me made me that revengeful that I couldn't help paying them out when I got the chance.

It was not the proper John King Bruce who did the things, but a man with a devil inside him; a devil put there by the cruelties of the murdering scoundrels, who properly paid for their wickedness with their lives.

No, sir; the real John King Bruce is not responsible for all that was done up to the time he ran away from the blackbirder, for he was mad.

And, sir, if you should put these things in a book—and somehow I think you will—just tell the kind, good people in England who read it that John King Bruce will die proud of being a Britisher, by which he got the acknowledged right of calling himself the "First white man on the beach."

FINIS.

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